

Rushcliffe Borough Council Complaints Policy 2024

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1. Introduction

Rushcliffe Borough Council aims to deliver excellent service to all our residents and customers ensuring we meet the needs of everyone.

We take complaints seriously and recognise there are times when mistakes are made. We welcome feedback because it's important that we investigate, correct any misdoing, and learn from this to continue service delivery improvements.

Everyone likes to be told they are doing a good job. Staff at the Council are no exception. We welcome compliments and will feed these back to staff so they know they have done a good job. Customer feedback can be negative, focusing on mistakes that have been made or things our customers would like us to do better.

This Policy outlines how we will resolve complaints and adhere to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

Both Ombudsmen provide a free, independent, and impartial complaints service. Complainants can contact them at any time throughout the complaint process for support in helping to resolve any dispute.

We will:

- Publicise this policy, the Joint Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code in leaflets, posters, newsletters & online.
- Provide contact information for both Ombudsmen.

The terms 'you' and 'your' in this Policy means the customer. The terms 'we,' 'our' and 'us' means Rushcliffe Borough Council.

2. What is a complaint

We define a complaint as dissatisfaction about the Council's actions or lack of actions, the standard of service provided by the Council or its contractors, or a member of staff. You do not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Complaints can be about many things including:

- dissatisfaction with the way our policies are carried out
- our failure to carry out a decision
- our failure to come to a decision or not take into account relevant factors when making a decision
- poor or inappropriate behaviour of our staff
- discrimination or bias you have experienced
- failure to fulfil our statutory duties.

You can complain about our standard of service, actions, or lack of action including anyone working for us (e.g., contractors)

We may accept older complaints at the discretion of the manager responsible for the service e.g., there are exceptional reasons as to why the complaint could not be raised/corresponded to within the timeframes mentioned.

3. How do I make a complaint?

We have developed and promoted digital reporting for a number of years, although there remain many ways that you can contact us:

- By using our online webform
- By email to customerfeedback@rushcliffe.gov.uk
- By letter - check our [find and contact us details](#)
- By telephone - 0115 981 99 11

- One of our [Social Media accounts](#)
- In person - check our [find and contact us details](#)

4. Complaints not covered by this policy

There are some complaints that fall outside the scope of this policy and should be dealt with in other ways:

- Grievances about employment from current or former employees. Contact Human Resources - hr@rushcliffe.uk
- Services that are not provided by us - [check the services on our website first](#), if we do not provide the service please contact the relevant service provider
- Complaints about a decision, for example:
 - Council Tax bandings, reductions etc - visit the [Council Tax section for information](#)
 - Housing Benefit appeals - [visit the appeals page for more information](#)
 - Licensing decisions - in the first instance to the licensing officers licensing@rushcliffe.gov.uk
 - Parking tickets - information about [challenging a parking fine](#)
 - Planning decisions - [planning appeals information](#)
- [Complaints about Councillors](#)
- Complaints that are a request for service – check [ways to contact us](#)
- Complaint regarding [fraud/corruption](#)
- Complaints about a racist incident - [report racist and other hate crimes](#)
- Complaints about safeguarding - contact the [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub](#)
- Complaints about an officer that are more appropriately dealt with under our disciplinary procedure - contact Human Resources - hr@rushcliffe.uk
- Complaints about damage caused by us as part of our work – email finance@rushcliffe.gov.uk

If we do not accept your complaint, we will provide reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and what alternative reporting options are available to you.

5. Equalities Act 2010

We take into account your communication preferences and make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010. View the council's full [equality policy](#).

6. Delivering this policy

Employees responsible for delivering this policy.

All Employees

Dealing with any dissatisfied customer where possible at the first point of contact. If unable to resolve a customer's issue, then this is escalated to a line manager or Lead Specialist.

Customer Services

Monitoring incoming communications to provide a triage service separating service requests from complaints that are valid stage 1 requests. Acknowledging requests and keeping complainants informed as required under this policy.

Communications and Customer Services Manager

Managing all customer stage 1 complaints in line with this policy including, investigating, communicating, and resolving complaints.

Overall decision for discretion to be applied to complaints including refusals to investigate.

Directors

Managing all customer stage 2 complaints in line with this policy including, investigating, communicating, and resolving complaints. Overall decision for discretion to be applied to complaints including refusals to investigate.

Corporate Complaints Officer

Managing all Ombudsman escalations in line with this policy. Providing independent advice on stage 2 complaints where appropriate.

7. Complaint process

We operate a two-stage complaints process. We will endeavour to resolve the complaint at stage one, however in the event this cannot be achieved, we will progress the complaint to stage two following an escalation request from the complainant. You can contact the Ombudsman Service at any point throughout your complaint for advice. They will not investigate your complaint until you have received a response to your stage 2 request.

7.1 Stage 1

We will acknowledge your complaint and pass to the appropriate Lead Specialist to review the complaint. We will aim to give you a full response within 10 working days of the complaint being logged. If this is not possible, if for instance we need more time to gather information, we will let you know when you can expect the response.

The response will answer all points raised in the complaint and will confirm:

- the complaint stage
- the decision on the complaint
- the reasons for any decisions made
- the details of any remedy
- details of any outstanding actions
- details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if you are not satisfied with the outcome

If any additional complaints regarding this matter are raised during the investigation we will incorporate these into the stage one response unless the response has been issued. If you do not engage with us to resolve the complaint during this process, we will close your complaint. This will be confirmed in writing.

7.2 Stage 2

Most complaints are resolved at stage 1; however, you may wish to request an escalation to stage two if you believe matters remain to be resolved.

We will aim to give you a full response within 10 working days of the complaint being logged. If this is not possible, if for instance we need more time to gather information, we will let you know when you can expect the response.

If you do not engage with us to resolve the complaint during this process, we will close your complaint. This will be confirmed in writing.

A Director of Service will carry out the investigation and respond to the issues raised in stage 2 request, and any which you feel were not addressed in the stage 1 response.

The response will answer all points raised in the complaint and will confirm:

- the complaint stage
- the decision on the complaint
- the reasons for any decisions made
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right
- details of any outstanding actions
- details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman.

8. Unhappy with our decision?

If you are not satisfied with the way your complaint has been investigated or the conclusions we have reached, you can contact the relevant Ombudsman, details of

how to do this will be provided in your Stage 2 response. The Ombudsman will only accept complaints that have followed both stages of our complaints process. Once the Ombudsman has reviewed your case, their decision is final.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH
- Telephone: 0300 061 0614
- [Local Government Ombudsman](#)

Housing Ombudsman

- Complaint form: Fill in the [online complaint form](#)
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Phone: [0300 111 3000](tel:03001113000)
- Write to:
Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET

9. Putting things right

We aim to put things right when something has gone wrong. This will vary; sometimes this will be training, or a new procedure note, better information online or the review of an internal policy.

Where we have identified service that has not met the required standards, a remedy will be offered that will be fair and will reflect the extent of any service failures and detriment caused to the complainant.

We are responsible for public resources and do not offer compensation automatically, however where a complainant has suffered a genuine loss resulting from our action compensation will be considered.

10. Learning from complaints

We want to learn from complaints as this helps us improve our services. Once your complaint has been closed, we may contact you to ask for your views on the handling and outcome of your complaint.

11. Vexatious complaints

We are committed to delivering a high-quality complaints procedure and will deal fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately with all complainants, including those whose actions we consider unacceptable. However, we retain the right, where we consider complainant actions to be unacceptable or vexatious, to restrict or change access to our services.

Examples may include:

- Making excessive demands on time and resources of staff whilst a complaint is being looked into, by for example excessive telephoning or sending emails to numerous council staff, writing lengthy complex letters and expecting immediate responses
- Being abusive to staff
- Refusing to accept the decision – repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision.

In very rare cases when a complainant has been deemed as vexatious or unreasonably persistent, the relevant Director will decide on what action is to be taken and the complainant will be advised in writing of any restrictions.

Examples of possible restrictions:

- Placing time limits on conversations both face to face and by telephone
- Terminating telephone calls where the complainant is rude, aggressive, using unacceptable language
- Limiting the complainant to one medium of contact (letter, email, telephone etc)
- Terminating telephone calls where the complainant has been advised in writing that communication is restricted to letter or email only
- Limit the complainant's access to one named employee

We are very pleased that we do not have to invoke these measures on a regular basis and thank all of our complainants for the respect they show towards our staff whilst they try to resolve your issues.