

If you have a complaint

We aim to provide high-quality services for everyone. However, we realise that things can sometimes go wrong, so we need to know when you are not happy with our service.

We see any complaints as an opportunity to improve our services. This leaflet explains how to complain about our services.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you tell us you are not happy. For example if:

- we do not deliver a service on time;
- we give you the wrong information;
- you receive a poor-quality service; or
- you have a complaint about a member of staff.

Our promise to you

We are committed to putting you first and providing a quality customer service. This includes dealing with any complaint you may have.

- We will deal with your complaint quickly and fairly.
- We will tell you what is happening with your complaint and we will do everything we can to help you.
- We will do our best to treat the information you give us in confidence.
- We will explain our decision.
- We will use complaints to review and improve the way we provide services.
- If you make a complaint, it will not affect your right to a council service.

How do I make a complaint?

You can complain in person, by phone, by letter, by e-mail or on line at our website.

If you prefer, you can ask a friend or relative to speak or write to us for you. When you contact us, please make sure you:

- **give your name, address, and phone number; and**
- **tell the person you speak to what your complaint is.**

If your complaint is about a member of staff, you should complain to their manager, not to other members of staff.

By law, we need to deal with some complaints in a different way. If so, we will tell you and give you more information.

Step 1

We will try to deal with your complaint informally. This means that you should phone or take your complaint to the office or person who dealt with your enquiry.

Our staff will do their best to settle your complaint without you needing to do anything else.

Step 2

If you have spoken to the relevant officer about your complaint but they have not been able to put things right, or you are not happy with the result, the next step is for you to make a formal complaint.

At this stage, you should put your complaint in writing. You can do this by letter or by filling in a complaints form which is attached to the booklet. You can send it to us without a stamp. You may also use our on line complaints form by visiting the Council's website or e-mailing us at **complaints@newcastle.gov.uk**

Please ask a member of staff if you need help to write your complaint or fill in the form. Again, if you prefer, a friend or relative can fill in the form for you.

We will write to you within three working days to let you know we have received your complaint. We will give you a reference number and the name of the senior manager who will investigate your complaint. This information will make it easier for you to contact the person dealing with your complaint if you need to.

The senior manager will:

- **investigate your complaint;**
- **take any necessary action; and**
- **make sure you receive a written reply within 15 working days.**

If your complaint needs more investigation, and we cannot send you a written reply within 15 working days, we will write to you and let you know when you will receive a written reply.

Step 3

If you have been through steps one and two and are still not happy with the results of our investigations, you can ask our Head of Democratic Services to review your complaint. **The Complaints Officer will write to you within three working days to let you know:**

- **we are reviewing your complaint;**
- **approximately how long it will take us to investigate; and**
- **when you will receive a written reply.**

Ombudsman

The Head of Democratic Services at the civic centre will also be able to help you if you would like your complaint to be passed to the Local Government Ombudsman.

You can contact the Local Government Ombudsman about your complaint at any time. You will find the Ombudsman's address and phone number at the back of this booklet. You can get leaflets about how to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman from any of our offices, customer service centres or any library.

Is there anyone who can help?

Apart from asking for help from a friend or relative, you can contact an independent person or organisation, for example:

- **your local councillor;**
- **your MP;**
- **a solicitor;**
- **Citizens Advice;**
- **Newcastle Advocacy Centre.**

You can get details of who your councillors and MPs are and how to get in touch with them from the Council website, at any of our offices, customer service centres, libraries or by contacting Members' Services at the Civic Centre. You can contact your councillor at any stage of the investigation. The councillor will normally ask the officers dealing with your complaint to provide details of why you complained and what they have done to put things right. The phone numbers for Citizens Advice and Newcastle Advocacy Service are listed at the back of this booklet.

Comments and suggestions

As well as learning from complaints, we want to know any comments or suggestions you may have to help us improve our services. You can do this by telling a member of staff about your comment or suggestion or by putting your comment or suggestion in writing.

Please ask a member of staff if you need help in writing your comment or suggestion.

Who should I contact ?

You can call into any of our offices, customer service centres or libraries to find out how to make a complaint.

You can phone the Council on **0191 211 5116**.

You can e-mail us on **complaints@newcastle.gov.uk**

You can write to us at:

Complaints Officer

Democratic Services

Civic Centre

Barras Bridge

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE99 2BN

Phone: **0191 211 5116 or 211 5180**

For complaints about how your council house is being managed please contact:

Your Homes Newcastle

YHN House

Benton Park Road

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE7 7LX

Phone **0191 278 8600**

Your Homes Newcastle is responsible for managing Newcastle City Councils housing stock.

We deal with;

- rent issues
- repairs and maintenance

- estate management
- Your Choice Homes lettings
- neighbourhood disputes

There are also a number of local community housing offices where you can get advice on making your complaint.

Who else can I contact?

Local Government Ombudsman

Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
York
YO30 5FZ
Phone **01904 380 200**
Fax: **01904 380 269**

Citizens Advice

Unit 12 Shopping Centre
Cruddas Park
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7RW
Phone: **08701 264 015**

Moorside Court
Cowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE5 3AP
Phone: **08701 264 015**

St. Cuthbert's Chambers
35 Nelson Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 5AN
Phone: **08701 264 015**

Newcastle Advocacy Centre

MEA House
Ellison Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8XS
Phone and textphone: **0191 232 7445**
Fax: **0191 230 5640**

July 2006