

# How to complain and give us feedback on our housing services

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## **Our approach to customer feedback and complaints**

Uttlesford District Council always aims to provide you with a high-quality service and welcomes all feedback about the services that we provide and how they could be improved.

We recognise that sometimes things go wrong, and you may be dissatisfied with the service you receive. We will take time to listen and understand the experience of our customers.

This document explains how Uttlesford District Council will manage the feedback we receive from our customers.

If you have a suggestion or complaint, please let us know. We will do our best to put the matter right and make sure that we improve the service we provide. We would also like to know if you are pleased with the service provided. We can share this with our staff and use the information to further improve our services.

## **Compliments**

You may want to congratulate us or an individual officer for a job well done, or a service provided in a way which has exceeded your expectations. We will share your views with those involved and encourage others to follow similar ways of working. Compliments are regularly reviewed by the Corporate Management Team and are shared through staff briefings.

## **Suggestions**

You may have an idea for improving our services. If you do, we would like to hear about it. We will acknowledge your suggestions and let you know how we will use them or explain why we are unable to.

## **Complaints**

We realise there may be times when things go wrong, and you may not be satisfied with the service you receive. The Council expects everyone who is involved in delivering services to always work to the highest standards of conduct and integrity, whether directly employed by the Council, suppliers and contractors. We will always investigate when standards have not been met.

We welcome and value your complaints and will try our utmost to resolve them and involve you in this. We aim to be fair, put things right and learn from our mistakes and improve services to prevent the same thing happening again. We would prefer

not to receive anonymised complaints; however, we recognise that not everyone is comfortable complaining. Information about complaints made by tenants is reviewed by the Corporate Management Team in order to identify any learning and address any trends.

The Governance, Audit and Performance Committee receives an annual report on complaints, including any escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

## **What is a complaint?**

We would consider a complaint to be **‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting individual or group of individuals.’**

## **How can you help us investigate complaints?**

It is important to provide as much information as possible so we can deal with your complaint promptly. This may include:

- The location/site of the subject of your complaint
- Relevant dates
- Names of any Council staff involved, if known
- How our service failed to meet your expectations
- What you would like us to do to put things right
- How you or others have been adversely affected by the service failure

If you are unable to complain yourself, we will accept complaints made on your behalf but will ask for your written permission for us to talk to a third party. Our Customer Services team can also provide advice and support in helping you to make a complaint.

## **What you should do if you have a complaint**

### **Make a complaint (Stage 1)**

- You can make a complaint by email, letter or through the online form on our website at [Complaint or comment on a housing repair - Uttlesford District Council](#). We will also accept a complaint over the telephone on 01799 510510.
- We will log your complaint and send you an acknowledgement that we have received your complaint within 5 working days (not including weekends and bank holidays).
- We will investigate and always aim to respond to your complaint in writing within 10 working days of the complaint being logged. Please note that complex complaints may take longer to investigate. Should this be the case, we will keep you informed of the likely timescale for fully resolving your complaint. If we need more than the 10 working days to resolve your complaint, we will discuss this with you first and provide clear reasons why we need to extend the timescale for a further period of time.

- If you ask us to deal with an issue that does not fall within our complaint's procedure, we will let you know what other options may be available to you. For example, by asking other Council services or outside organisations.
- We will also let you know how to move your complaint to Stage 2 of the procedure if you are not happy with the response at Stage 1, you have 7 days in which to escalate your complaint to stage 2.

### **Ask for a review of your complaint (Stage 2)**

- Once the manager has responded at Stage 1, if you are unhappy with the way your complaint has been dealt with, you have 7 days to contact us, and we will escalate your complaint to the relevant Director.
- For complaints which relate to the conduct of a Director these will be reviewed by a Director of another Council service or the Chief Executive. Complaints relating to the Chief Executive will be reviewed by the Leader of the Council.
- In the correspondence you should let us know why you were not satisfied with either the way we handled your complaint at Stage 1 or the response we gave you.
- We will log your complaint and send you an acknowledgement that we have received your Stage 2 complaint within 5 working days.
- The Stage 2 Investigating Officer will investigate your complaint further and again aim to respond within 10 working days of the complaint being logged.
- The purpose of Stage 2 is to ensure that everything you raised in your original complaint has been looked at in detail and correctly addressed and, if not, to make sure that this now happens.

### **Refer to the Housing Ombudsman**

Once the Council's complaints procedure has concluded you can refer the matter to the [Housing Ombudsman](#). The Housing Ombudsman Service is a government-sponsored, independent body which investigates and resolves complaints about social landlords, including local authorities. The Ombudsman has powers to ask the Council to resolve complaints in a certain way, including putting things right and paying compensation to tenants.

You can also contact the Housing Ombudsman for general advice about making complaints about the housing service.

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman:

- by phone 0300 111 3000
- by email [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- [using an online form](#)
- by writing to Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

The Housing Ombudsman's investigations are free and confidential.

## Making a complaint about other Council services

Not all housing-related complaints are dealt with by the Housing Ombudsman. These include complaints about your homeless application or private sector accommodation. For complaints about these services, please refer to the Council's general [Complaints Policy](#).

For complaints relating to housing applications, housing options, homelessness enquiries and private sector housing issues, or any other Council services not covered in the Housing Complaints Policy you can also contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

You can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman:

- by phone on 0300 061 0614
- through the [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman website](#)
- by writing to Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH

## What our Housing Complaints Policy does not cover

- We generally do not investigate complaints where you are complaining about something that happened 12 months ago or longer. However, we will look at each case separately and, in some cases, we may accept the complaint.
- Complaints relating to non-housing services, or services relating to homelessness applications or private sector housing. Please refer to the [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman website](#).
- Routine requests for housing services, such as reporting a repair or another issue, or asking for us to deliver a service to you for the first time. [Find out how to get in touch with us](#).
- [Routine requests for services](#) which are not housing related.
- [Reporting fraud](#).
- Services provided by Essex County Council or another organisation. Where you contact us to make a complaint and the service you are complaining about is not delivered by Uttlesford District Council, we will do our best to advise you which organisation you should contact.
- Complaints about councillors. If your complaint is about a councillor, please tell us in writing by sending an email to: [MonitoringOfficer@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:MonitoringOfficer@uttlesford.gov.uk) or you can write to the Monitoring Officer at Uttlesford District Council, Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB11 4ER.

## Abusive, Persistent or Vexatious Complaints

The Council has a separate process available on our website for dealing with complaints which meet our definition of "unreasonable complainant behaviour" and "unreasonable persistent complaints".

## **Support Agencies**

If you would like to receive support from an independent Support Agency such as Citizens Advice, Shelter and Age UK we will do our best to assist you.

## **Confidentiality**

We will comply with the requirements of the data protection law.

## **Statutory and Regulatory Requirements**

The Councils approach to complaints will comply with all relevant statutes and regulations including but not limited to the Localism Act, Housing Act, General Data Protection Act, Equality Act and the regulatory requirements of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman.

## **Contact Uttlesford District Council**

Email: [uconnect@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:uconnect@uttlesford.gov.uk)

Complete an [online enquiry form](#)

Telephone: 01799 510510

Date of policy: October 2023