

Customer feedback policy

- 1 Overview
- 2 Aims
- 3 Types of customer feedback
- 4 Complaints process
- 5 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
- 6 Monitoring and review

1. Overview

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) is committed to delivering accessible, responsive, and high-quality services to residents, businesses, and communities, underpinned by our values and a commitment to delivering an excellent, consistent experience across all contact channels. We aim to make every interaction count by providing services that are easy to access, consistent in quality, and shaped around the diverse needs of our communities, whichever way they choose to contact us.

2. Aims

We are committed to constantly reviewing and improving the delivery of services for all of our customers. We value customer feedback to help us maintain and improve our services. You might want to suggest improvements, or you might want to compliment us on getting it right. Equally, when something goes wrong, we would really like to hear your concerns.

We are committed to ensuring that our Customer Feedback Policy is accessible and transparent. We will publicise our approach through the following channels:

- **Our website:** The Customer Feedback Policy will be easy to find on our website, with clear navigation.
- **Customer communications:** Customers will be directed to the policy when we acknowledge a complaint.
- **Staff training:** Staff will be trained to explain the policy clearly and support customers through the customer feedback process.

3. Types of customer feedback

Comments

Comments may include opinions about our services, suggestions for improvement, questions, or feedback on our website. These can be submitted through:

- The [Contact Us](#) form on our website.
- By email mail@huntingdonshire.gov.uk.
- By phone: 01480 388388.
- Through the [social media channels](#) listed on our website.
- Using our [Voice Bot Service](#) on 01480 775799, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You can find the contact details for the different council services within the relevant pages on our website.

Compliments

A compliment may relate to a service, a team, or an individual member of staff. We welcome feedback where excellent customer service has been received, for example, where staff have been helpful, professional, or clear in their advice. We share compliments as examples of good practice and may use them in the training of new staff. You can share a compliment through:

- The [Contact Us](#) form on our website.
- By email mail@huntingdonshire.gov.uk.
- By phone: 01480 388388.
- Through the [social media channels](#) listed on our website.
- Using our [Voice Bot Service](#) on 01480 775799, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You can find the contact details for the different council services within the relevant pages on our website.

Complaints

Good complaint handling helps people feel heard and understood. It starts with a clear understanding of the difference between a service request and a complaint. Most issues can be resolved through normal service request processes.

A **service request** may be defined as “a request that asks the council to provide or improve a service, fix a problem, or reconsider a decision.”

The council should have the opportunity to deal with a service request before a complaint is made. We encourage any customer who has a concern to first contact the relevant service, who will try to resolve the issue for you. You can contact a service or give feedback online or talk to our Customer Service Team on 01480 388388. If the problem can be solved at that point, then there may be no need for the issue to go through the formal complaints process.

A **complaint** may be defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions taken or lack of action by the council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals”.

This could be dissatisfaction with any of the following:

- Customer service received.
- Council employee behaviour*.
- Failure to respond.
- Site facilities.

*We take complaints about staff seriously. These should be made directly to us and will be handled under the complaints process, unless they involve HR matters — in which case HR procedures will apply instead. We may not be able to provide details of the outcome of that complaint, depending on the nature of the complaint and its allegations.

4. Complaints process

When a complaint can be made

We encourage you to raise a complaint as soon as possible after an incident, as it is easier to gather relevant information at the time. While we ask that complaints be made within 3 months, we can investigate an issue up to 1 year after it occurred.

How to submit a complaint

Information about the council complaints process can be found on our website [Customer Feedback page](#).

We can accept a complaint in any of the formats listed below. However, for the sake of clarity, any complaint, and the steps taken to deal with it, should be recorded in writing.

You can submit a complaint in one of the following ways:

- Completing the [Complaints Form](#) on our website.
- By phone: 01480 388388.
- By letter to: Complaints, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN.
- By email Complaints@huntingdonshire.gov.uk.
- In person at our Customer Service Centre in Pathfinder House in Huntingdon, or if your complaint relates to One Leisure, at any of the four One Leisure sites.

To enable us to investigate your complaint fully it would be helpful if you could tell us:

- What you think the council did wrong.
- When it happened.
- What you think the council should do to put things right.

Complaint stages

We will manage complaints in two stages.

Stage one - A service manager from the relevant area will manage the investigation and work hard to resolve the issue promptly. This may or may not be the manager/team member who was involved at any previous resolution stage.

A council representative should acknowledge a complaint and log it at stage 1 of the complaint's procedure within 5 working days of the complaint being received. You should then receive a response within 10 working days of the stage 1 complaint being acknowledged.

Stage two - If you remain dissatisfied after stage one, the complaint will be passed onto the next stage, where it will be investigated by a relevant senior officer or independent officer. A council representative should acknowledge a request for stage 2 and log it at stage 2 of the complaint's procedure within 5 working days of the escalation request being received. You should be provided with a response within 20 working days of the stage 2 complaint being acknowledged.

Once a complaint has gone through both stages of the council's complaints procedure, we cannot re-open a complaint which deals with the same matter. If a customer remains dissatisfied, we will signpost them to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Putting things right

If the council is at fault, we will put things right by admitting the mistake, apologising, explaining what went wrong, and taking steps to prevent the issue happening again.

Extensions

In cases where a complaint is complex or involves multiple service areas or departments, we will usually provide a single coordinated response, unless otherwise agreed. If the nature of the complaint requires additional time for a thorough investigation, you (the complainant) will be informed as early as possible and advised when to expect a response.

What is not a complaint

There are some situations that the council would not take through the complaints process and will not be recorded as a formal complaint, for example:

- **Requests for service or information** - If a customer raises a concern with the council for the first time, it will be treated as a service resolution request (a service request alerting us to work that needs to be done). We will not class a service resolution request as a formal complaint at this stage as the service area has not yet had the opportunity to deal with it.
- **Disagreement with the result of a process that has its own appeal/tribunal process** - Appeal processes exist for a number of areas including benefit claims, council tax and business rates liability disputes, car parking fines (see below), planning applications and housing reviews.
- **Penalty Charge Notices relating to Civil Parking Enforcement** - An established process is in place to challenge/appeal a PCN supported by legislation. More information is available at the following link <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/streets-parking/parking/fines-appeals/> You are able raise a complaint about a member of staff however this is separate to a PCN challenge/appeal and will have no bearing on the challenge/appeal outcome.
- **Complaints about the conduct of a Councillor** – The Monitoring Officer will deal with these complaints. Further information can be found on our website [here](#)
- **Insurance claims** - If someone is seeking payment for loss or damage from the council, the matter will be referred to our Insurance Team to be handled as a formal claim.
- **Complaints that are expressions of dissatisfaction with the council or government policy rather than the council's failure to meet service standards** - If the policy decision has been agreed by councillors following proper procedures

as set out in the council's constitution, an individual cannot make a formal complaint about it. However, the council will do its best to explain the policy and the reasons for it.

- **Issues that have already had a decision at court or in tribunal.**
- **Issues that have already had a final decision from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.**
- **If the issue is more than 12 months old** - It is likely it would be deemed too old to be investigated as a formal complaint, unless there is a good reason for the delay (for example, someone has been unable to lodge their complaint earlier due to incapacity, or where new information has come to light which could have affected the original investigation).
- **Issues that fall under the Freedom of Information Act or General Data Protection Regulation** (including the right of access to personal data) which fall under the Information Commissioner's Office.
- **If the complaint is about an issue that is outside the council's responsibility** – In this instance, where possible, we will signpost the complainant to the appropriate place. We will not forward customer details (in line with data protection regulations).
- **Unreasonable complainant behaviour** – We recognise that some complainants may feel their concerns remain unresolved. In a small number of cases, individuals may act unreasonably, for example, by displaying unacceptable behaviour or making persistent and excessive contact. This can lead to unproductive interactions, delay complaint resolution, and place unnecessary pressure on council resources.

While we are committed to addressing all complaints fairly, we reserve the right to cease communication if unacceptable behaviour continues. All individuals engaging with the complaints process are expected to treat council staff with respect and

dignity. Rudeness, aggression, or abuse will not be tolerated. Our [Policy for the Management of Unreasonable Customer Behaviour](#) can be found on our website.

- **Anonymous complaints** – These will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and on a case-by-case basis. In some instances, they may highlight issues that require investigation by the Corporate Fraud Team. More information can be found on our [Report Fraud webpage](#).

Confidentiality

We handle complaints in line with data protection laws. The identity of the person making a complaint is only shared with those who need to know, usually the people involved in reviewing the complaint. We will not make this information public.

Reasonable adjustments

We aim to ensure fair access to our services, please let us know if you require any adjustments to support you during the complaints process, such as accessible formats, communication support, or additional time.

Representatives

You (the complainant) may wish to have a third-party act on your behalf. A third-party is any person or organisation acting on behalf of or making enquiries for the complainant. Consent will be required to share any relevant personal and confidential information with them for the purpose of addressing and resolving a complaint.

5. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Our policy has been shaped by the [LGSCO Complaints Handling Code](#) which sets out a process for organisations that will allow them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. The purpose of the code is to enable organisations to resolve complaints raised by individuals promptly, and to use the data and learn from complaints to drive service improvements.

The LGSCO is an independent organisation which looks at individual complaints about

councils and some other organisations providing local public services. The LGSCO investigates complaints in a fair and independent way - it does not take sides and is a free service.

If you have been through all stages of the council's complaints procedure and remain dissatisfied, you can ask the LGSCO to review your complaint. You can contact the LGSCO at any point in the complaints process, although you may be advised your complaint is premature.

The LGSCO expects complainants to have given the council a chance to deal with the complaint before they contact them. If a complainant has not heard from the council within a reasonable timescale, the LGSCO may decide to look into the complaint in any case. The ombudsman can be contacted via [their website](#) or phone 0300 061 0614

6. Monitoring and review

We will share learning from customer feedback across the organisation. This will help us to improve our services for our customers.

All complaints will be recorded on our complaints management system, and will help us to:

- Efficiently deal with complaints.
- Monitor our performance.
- Identify service improvements.

All compliments will be recorded on our compliments management system and help us to share good practice across the council.

Use of customer feedback data

HDC uses complaints and compliments data to monitor performance and improve services. This information supports the council's corporate key performance indicators, monthly reports to the Corporate Leadership Team, and the annual customer feedback report. The annual report is presented to the Corporate Governance Committee and made available to the public on the council's website.

The report includes:

- Number of compliments by service area.
- Common themes in compliments.
- Number of complaints by service area.
- Complaint themes.
- Percentage of complaints responded to on time.
- Data on complaints upheld/not upheld/partially upheld.
- Performance on Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman cases.
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman self-assessment against the requirements of the code.
- Actions taken and service improvements made in response to complaints.

Review

This policy will be reviewed as needed to ensure it remains effective and reflects best practice. The council reserves the right to make changes at short notice if circumstances require immediate updates.

Retention

Complaint documents are kept for 6 years as per the council's Retention Policy.

Approved – March 2026