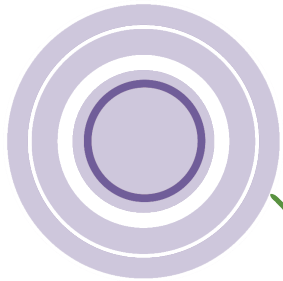


How to make a **complaint**



West Lothian Council

Complaints procedure



westlothian.gov.uk



West Lothian
Council

Complaints procedure

West Lothian Council is committed to providing high-quality customer services. **We value complaints and use the information from them to help us improve our services.**

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- our standard of service
- council policy
- treatment by, or attitude of, a member of staff
- our failure to follow proper procedure.

Your complaint may involve more than one council service or be about someone working on our behalf.

What can't I complain about?

There are some issues we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service, for example a first-time request for a housing repair or action on antisocial behaviour
- requests for compensation from the council
- things that are covered by a right of appeal. Here are some examples:
 - ▶ If you are dissatisfied with the level of priority you have been given when applying for a house, you have the right to appeal.
 - ▶ If your planning application is refused, you have a right of appeal to Scottish Ministers within six months of the decision.
 - ▶ If you believe your house is incorrectly valued for council tax, you can appeal to the Assessor.

You can find information about appeals on our website. If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will provide information and advice to help you.

Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. Please also read the section on 'Getting help to make your complaint'.

How do I complain?

You can complain in person at any of our offices, by phone, in writing or email via our complaints form.

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems at this time. If you want to complain about a business or service that the Council regulates then you must do this in writing.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about your complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

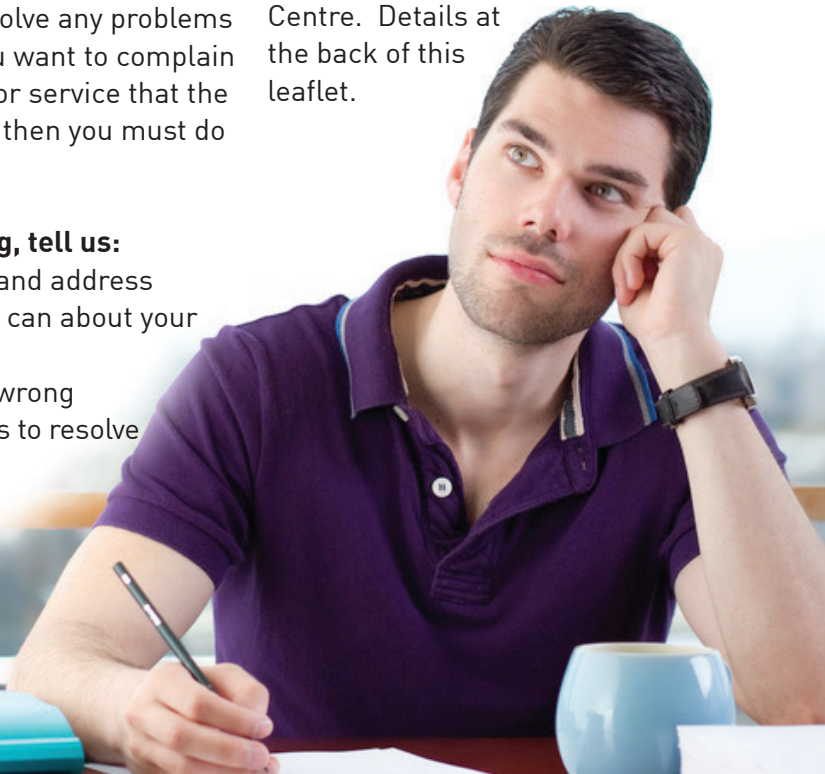
How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about, or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

If you are unsure what to do please contact the Customer Service Centre. Details at the back of this leaflet.



What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage one – resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and if possible immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage One within five working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. In which case we will keep you informed of progress.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage Two. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

Stage two – investigation

Stage Two deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage One and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage Two we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

Statutory Social Work complaints

It is frequently the case that a complaint regarding social work services falls within the definition of a "statutory social work complaint." You can get more information from www.westlothianhcp.org.uk

The statutory social work complaints procedure has different time scales. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 calendar days. The acknowledgement will tell you which council officer will investigate the complaint and that a response will normally be provided within 28 calendar days.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated your complaint, if you are dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not been completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has completed before contacting the SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

Contacting the SPSO

You can contact the SPSO

In Person:
SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

By Post:
SPSO
Freeport EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 0BR

Freephone: **0800 377 7330**

Online contact: **www.spso.org.uk/contact-us**

Website: **www.spso.org.uk**

Mobile site: **<http://m.spso.org.uk>**



Care complaints

If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose to either complain to the council or the Care Inspectorate. You can find out more about their complaints procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting them.

Care Inspectorate

The Care Inspectorate has several offices around Scotland. Please refer to: www.scswis.com

Or

Telephone: **0845 600 9527**

Fax: **01382 207 289**

Web: **Online complaints form**

Email: **enquiries@careinspectorate.com**



Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain on your behalf.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: **0131 260 5380**

Fax: **0131 260 5381**

Website: **www.siaa.org.uk**

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services.

If you have difficulties putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format such as large font or Braille, please tell us in person, contact us on **01506 280000**, or email us at **customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk**



Complaints Procedure

...a quick guide

Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by e-mail or in writing.

We have a **TWO-STAGE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage One: resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within five working days if we can. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage Two.

Stage Two: investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage One. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days. We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than 20 working days unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.

Our contact details

Please contact us by the following means:

- In person at any **Council Office**
- By phone on **01506 280000**
- By email at **customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk**
- In writing by filling in the attached form or writing a letter to:

**Customer Service Centre,
West Lothian Council,
Civic Centre,
Howden Road South,
Livingston EH54 6FF**

Information is available in Braille, tape, Large print and community languages. Please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service on 01506 280000.

