

If you require this policy in a different format, please call 01634 331794

## Medway Council Feedback Policy

This policy outlines the process for handling corporate compliments, comments, and complaints received by Medway Council.

Effective from: 1 May 2025

Review due: 1 May 2026

### Purpose

This policy sets out how Medway Council receives, records and responds to feedback from customers about its corporate services, and how we learn from all feedback.

The policy ensures that all corporate compliments and complaints are handled in a fair, transparent, and timely manner.

This policy is available to read on our website [www.medway.gov.uk/yourfeedback](http://www.medway.gov.uk/yourfeedback)

### Scope

This policy covers compliments, comments, and complaints about all Medway Council corporate services.

Corporate services are defined as 'all services provided by Medway Council (including contracted services working on behalf of Medway Council), except children's and adult social care'. Our website explains how we deal with [adult social care complaints](#) and [children's social care complaints](#).

**Medway Council** is referred to as '**we**' or '**us**' throughout this policy.

The **customer, resident, visitor, or complainant** is referred to as '**you**' throughout this policy.

[See our full list of exclusions.](#)

### Policy statement

We are committed to providing high-quality services to our residents and visitors to Medway. We recognise that there may be times when you are not satisfied with the services we provided and wish to make a complaint. We also appreciate positive feedback when we exceed your expectations or for a job well done. We welcome all feedback and use it to improve our services and to recognise colleagues where appropriate.

Medway Council's Feedback Policy is written in line with the Complaint Handling Codes set out by both the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman \(LGSCO\)](#) and the [Housing Ombudsman Service \(HOS\)](#).

## Do you need help to use our service?

If you have difficulty using our service (for example, if you have a disability, or English is not your first language) please let us know, so that we can discuss with you what help we may be able to give.

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## Medway Council Customer Pledge

We aim to:

- Get the job done by responding to enquiries promptly and keeping customers informed if we can't deal with an issue straight away.
- Be professional, courteous, and helpful, treat customers fairly and respect their privacy.
- Continuously improve and modernise our business, make services accessible, support customers to use our online services, listen to feedback and put things right where we have got it wrong.

In return, we ask that you use our website and online forms, wherever possible, to access our services, and that you treat our staff with dignity and respect and let us know how we are doing by giving us your feedback.

You can find out more about [Medway Council's Customer Pledge here](#).

## Who can provide feedback?

Any resident or visitor to Medway who receives a service from Medway Council or a contractor working on behalf of Medway Council.

If you wish to make a complaint on behalf of another resident or visitor to Medway, we will ask you to provide their consent or request it from them. Where consent is provided, we will communicate with the person who has made the complaint, and if we need to meet with you, we will invite both the complainant, and the person they are complaining on behalf of, to the meeting.

If you are unable to provide us with the necessary consent, then we may decide to accept your complaint, but provide our response directly to the person you are complaining on behalf of.

## How Medway Council receives feedback

You (or your representative) can provide feedback in one of the following ways.

- [Fill in our online form](#)
- Write to: Customer Relations Team, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR
- In person at a [local library or Community hub](#)
- Phone: 01634 333 333
- Text relay: 18001 01634 333 333

## Accessibility

We aim to anticipate the needs of disabled people to ensure that our services are accessible to all. Additionally, where a specific need is made known to us, we will make reasonable adjustments to support you through the complaint process.

## Compliments

We will share your compliment with the manager of the staff member or team you have told us about. We will also collect positive feedback and share the themes with senior managers so that these positive experiences can be utilised in staff training and development.

We appreciate the time that you take to let us know how pleased you are with our service, however we are unable to reply to compliments.

## Definition of a complaint

The [LGSCO defines a complaint](#) as ‘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 an individual or group of individuals.’

Individuals do not need to use the word ‘complaint’ for their concerns to be treated as such.

Where we have made a mistake, we will apologise and aim to explain this in an open and transparent way, take action to remedy any injustice our mistake has caused, and take the opportunity to learn and make improvements.

You should contact us as soon as you are aware of the issue so that we can try to resolve the problem quickly. It is unlikely that we can accept complaints made more than 12 months after the issue was known to you.

## Corporate Complaint Procedure

We have a two stage complaint procedure, after which you can refer your complaint to the relevant Ombudsman.

On receipt of your complaint, we may contact you for more information, if your complaint appears unclear. We may reject your complaint if we do not understand it and you do not provide enough information to help us to understand it.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days.

## Stage 1

At stage 1, your complaint will be investigated by the relevant service, and we will aim to respond within 10 working days of acknowledging the complaint. If we need more time, we will let you know the reason as soon as possible, and provide you with a revised deadline, which will usually be a further 10 working days.

If additional issues are raised during our investigation of an open complaint, we will usually accept them if the issues relate to the original complaint, and if this will not unreasonably delay our response. Otherwise, we will consider whether it is appropriate to open a new, separate complaint.

If you are still unhappy following our stage 1 response, you can request a review of your complaint at stage 2. You should do this as soon as possible after receiving our stage 1 response, and ideally within 20 working days. We may accept some requests after this period, depending on the circumstances. Our stage 1 response will tell you how to escalate your complaint to stage 2.

## Stage 2

Stage 2 complaints should be made in writing wherever possible and should explain why you are unhappy with our stage 1 response. If you are unable to put your complaint in writing, due to disability, we will make the reasonable adjustments necessary to support you to make your complaint.

We will aim to tell you the outcome of our stage 2 review within 20 working days of acknowledgement.

If we need more time, we will let you know the reason as soon as possible, and provide you with a revised deadline, which will usually be a further 20 working days.

If, upon completion of both stages of our complaint process, you remain unhappy with our final decision, you can refer your complaint to the relevant Ombudsman. We will tell you how to do that in our final response.

## Ombudsman

You can contact the Ombudsman if:

- You remain dissatisfied with our final decision.
- We have rejected your complaint at any stage.
- You are unhappy with how we have handled your complaint.

The Ombudsman investigates complaints in a fair and independent way – it does not take sides. It will look at individual complaints about councils and some other organisations that provide local public services. You can [find out more about what the Ombudsman can look at here](#). The Ombudsman may not consider your complaint if you have not been significantly personally affected by the issue you are raising, or if you have a right of appeal to a court or tribunal.

The Ombudsman is a free service.

The [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman \(LGSCO\)](#) considers individual complaints about services delivered by the council. You can contact it at [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk) or by phone on 0300 061 0614.

The [Housing Ombudsman Service \(HOS\)](#) considers complaints about Medway Council's responsibility as a landlord.

You can contact it at [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk) or by phone on 0300 111 3000.

The Ombudsman expects you to have given us a chance to deal with your complaint before you contact them.

## Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated confidentially and in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Information about your complaint will only be shared with those

who need to know in order to investigate and respond to the complaint. [View our Privacy Statement.](#)

## What we can accept

We will investigate complaints about all corporate services provided by Medway Council and its partners, or those contracted to work on its behalf. If your complaint is about a partner or contractor, you can choose whether to complain to them or to us. If you complain to us, we will investigate your complaint. We do not expect you to follow two complaint processes.

Complaints about Children's Social Care are governed by [The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) and are not covered by this policy.

Complaints about Adult Social Care services are governed by [The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints \(England\) Regulations 2009](#) and are not covered by this policy.

## What we cannot accept

There are some matters which we cannot investigate under Medway Council's Feedback policy. This may be because:

- the matter should be dealt with as a [request for service](#).
- there is another process, such as an appeal or tribunal available to use.
- the complaint is out of Medway Council's jurisdiction.
- it is about how we have used customers' data and it is more appropriate to be considered under General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- the complaint is made more than 12 months after you became aware of the issue and there is no valid reason for the delay in raising this with Medway Council.
- the complaint has previously been investigated by Medway Council or an Ombudsman.

[See our full list of exclusions.](#)

If we feel that a complaint should be dealt with under one of these separate processes, we will contact you to let you know what will happen next.

## Request for service

The [LGSCO defines a service request](#) as "a request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision".

The [HOS defines a service request](#) as "a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right".

If, on receipt of a complaint, we feel we have not had an opportunity to resolve the issue first, we will pass it to the relevant service to deal with as a 'service request', and we will contact you to let you know that we have done this.

The service will take appropriate action to resolve the issue. If you remain unhappy after they have tried to resolve the issue, you may raise a complaint.

## How we will contact you

Where possible, we will contact you using the method you specified when making your complaint. If that is not possible, we will try to make contact using any other contact information you provided us with, when you made your complaint.

## Learning from feedback

Your opinions are important to us. We actively encourage learning from complaints and use them to improve our services. We record compliments, complaints, and comments on our corporate complaint management system. We provide information about the themes of compliments and complaints to senior managers across the council. We share the learning from complaints at various performance discussions and track the changes made because of complaints.

## Reporting, performance, and accountability

Gathering and analysing compliments and complaint data helps us to learn and make lasting improvements.

We report complaint data and analysis to senior managers every quarter, and at the end of the financial year to relevant scrutiny committees.

We expect to respond to a minimum of 80% of stage 1 complaints within a total of 15 working days, and a minimum of 75% stage 2 complaints within a total of 25 working days.

Working days are calculated following the day of receipt, excluding all national public holidays, Medway Council's ex-gratia day (one day per year), and all weekends.

We publish our corporate compliments and complaints annual report on our website. It includes:

- Qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance, including a summary of the types of complaints we refused to accept.
- Service improvements made because of the lessons learned from complaints.
- Any annual report about our performance from the relevant Ombudsman
- Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the relevant Ombudsman in relation to our work.
- Our annual self-assessment against the LGSCO's Complaint Handling Code along with any findings of non-compliance

## Vexatious and persistent complainers

Occasionally, customers act in an abusive, unreasonably persistent or vexatious manner. When this happens, we follow guidelines from our Persistent Complainants Policy.

## Review of the Medway Council Feedback Policy

The council's Monitoring Officer will review this Feedback Policy annually and approve significant changes to Medway Council's complaint procedure that impact the policy.

## Scope of the Medway Council Feedback Policy

What is not covered by this policy:

- Enquiries from members of parliament and locally elected members. These will be dealt with through our MP and Councillor Enquiries process.
- Complaints about parish or town councils. These should be sent directly to the relevant parish or town using the information provided on their websites.
- Statutory complaints about Children's or Adults Social Care Services. There are separate processes to deal with these. For more information, or to make a complaint about Medway Council's [Children's Social Care](#) or [Adults Social Care Services](#), contact:
  - Email: [sccm@medway.gov.uk](mailto:sccm@medway.gov.uk)
  - Telephone: 01634 333036
  - Address: Customer Relations Team, Medway Council, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR
- Requests for a service, for example, a missed waste collection. These will be dealt with as a service request. [Find contact details for our services.](#)
- School complaints, unless the complaint is about the Council's statutory education responsibilities (such as school transport, provision of Education and Health Care Plan, and school admission). Customers should send complaints to the relevant school, as schools have their [own complaints procedures](#).
- Where there is already an appeals process for decisions made by the council, for example, home to school transport, school admissions, planning decisions, housing benefit decisions, council tax, business rates and recovery, parking charge notices, or housing allocations. We can only investigate the handling of the application under our complaint procedure, not the decision itself.
- Complaints about councillors. The council's Monitoring Officer deals with complaints about [Councillor code of conduct](#).
- Potential data incidents or data breaches under the Data Protection Act 2018, or dissatisfaction with the outcome or processing of a Freedom of Information or Environmental Information Request or a Subject Access Request. These must be reported to the Council's Data Protection Officer as soon as possible so that an investigation can be undertaken, and a referral made to the Office of the Information Commissioner if necessary. Please see our [Data Protection information page](#).
- Complaints about an issue that was known about for more than 12 months before the complaint was made to the council, unless there is a good reason for the delay.
- Objections from a third party about a planning application under consideration by the council. These will be added as representations to the application.
- Complaints about matters that have already exhausted our complaint process or have been investigated by the Ombudsman.
- Disagreements with a council policy or rule of law where you are not directly adversely affected.

- Complaints by a prospective, current or ex-employee about a personnel matter, such as salary, employment and disciplinary issues. These are dealt with under the Council's HR procedures.
- Where any parallel legal processes have already started (or where it is considered appropriate for you to start legal proceedings). If you wish to submit a further complaint after the conclusion of those legal proceedings, we are not able to consider any points which the court has (directly or indirectly) considered. In these circumstances we reserve the right to refuse to accept any, or all, aspects of the complaint, as appropriate.
- Anonymous complaints. These are logged as service requests, unless the complaint raises issues of wider concern to the council that can be dealt with without further input from the anonymous complainant.
- Complaints which have not affected you personally or caused you an