

Compliments, Complaints & Feedback Procedure

(Corporate and Housing Landlord Services)

October 2025

1. Introduction

The views of our residents, service users and customers are important to us. Breckland District Council is committed to delivering high standards of customer care and continuous improvement.

We value all feedback, whether positive or negative - as it helps us to understand how well we are performing, what we do well, and where we need to improve.

All officers will adopt a collaborative and co-operative approach to resolving complaints, working constructively across teams and departments. The Council will take collective responsibility for addressing any shortfalls identified and ensure accountability for our actions.

This procedure sets out how complainants and service users can give compliments, complaints or feedback, and how we will respond. It has been designed to comply with guidance issued by:

- **The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)** – for complaints relating to the Council's role as a social housing landlord, in respect of residential properties owned or managed by the Council, including issues such as tenancy management, repairs, and maintenance of council-owned homes. We will refer to these as a Housing Landlord Complaint within this document.
- **The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)** – for complaints about the Council's wider services and administrative functions, which may include certain housing-related matters (such as housing allocations or homelessness services). We will refer to these as a Corporate Complaint within this document.

Where this policy does not specify which Ombudsman's process applies, it should be interpreted as applying to both Housing Landlord and Corporate Complaints.

At each stage of the complaints process, we will:

- Deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind.
- Give you a fair chance to set out your position.
- Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- Consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.

2. What Is a Compliment, Complaint or Feedback?

Compliment

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction or praise for a service, member of staff, or team. Compliments help us recognise good performance and share learning across services.

All compliments are acknowledged and shared with the relevant staff and managers. Compliments about elected Members are shared with the relevant Member and Group Leader.

Complaint

We adopt both Ombudsmen's definitions of a complaint:

- **Housing Ombudsman:**
“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 resident or group of residents.”
- **LGSCO:**
“An expression of dissatisfaction about service, action or lack of action, however made, provided directly by the Council or by a contractor or partner, affecting an individual resident or a group of residents, that requires a response.”

A person does not need to use the word “*complaint*” for it to be treated as one.

Feedback

Feedback includes suggestions, ideas, or comments about how we can improve our services or decisions made in line with Council policy. Feedback is shared with the relevant service area for review and action as appropriate.

3. Who Can Complain?

Anyone who uses or is affected by our services may make a complaint. Complaints can also be made by:

- A third party on your behalf or a representative (with the individual's consent if required)
- An advocate, Councillor or MP acting on someone's behalf

4. What Is Not a Complaint?

It is important to distinguish between a service request and a complaint.

A service request is a request from a resident asking the Council to take action to put something right — for example, to repair a fault, resolve an issue, or deliver a service that has not yet been provided.

Where a resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, this will be treated as a complaint, even if work to address the original service request is still ongoing. We will continue our efforts to resolve the service request while also managing the complaint under this procedure.

We will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If the Council decides not to accept a complaint, we will explain the reasons why. If there is more than one aspect of your complaint, we will confirm which parts we will or will not deal with.

This procedure does not cover:

- First-time service requests (e.g. reporting a missed bin)
- Appeals where another statutory process applies (e.g. planning or benefits appeals)
- Complaints already subject to legal action by or against us or proceedings where a Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, has been filed (lodged) at court or an insurance claim is being pursued

- Complaints about elected Members (covered by the Member Code of Conduct)
- General disagreement with policy decisions (feedback route)

5. Housing vs Non-Housing Complaints

Service Area	Ombudsman Body	Examples
Housing Management, Repairs, Rent, Tenancy Advice	Housing Ombudsman	Leaks, repairs, antisocial behaviour handling
Housing Allocations, Homelessness, Housing Benefit	Local Government Ombudsman	Delay in processing homelessness applications
Council Tax, Planning, Environmental Health, Waste	Local Government Ombudsman	Missed bins, noise nuisance, delays in decisions

We will confirm which Ombudsman applies when we acknowledge your complaint.

6. How to Give a Compliment, Complaint or Feedback

You can contact us in the following ways:

- Online: [Compliments & Complaints - Breckland Council](#)
- By phone: 01362 656870
- By email: feedback-data@breckland.gov.uk
- In person at any council office

Dereham Office:
Breckland Council
Elizabeth House
Walpole Loke
Dereham
NR19 1EE

Thetford Office:
Breckland House,
St Nicholas Street,
Thetford,
IP24 1BT

- By post:
Governance and Information Officer
Information Governance Team
Breckland Council
Elizabeth House
Walpole Loke
Dereham
NR19 1EE

You do not need to complete a specific form or use the word “*complaint*.”

7. Accessibility and Support

We will make reasonable adjustments to meet individual needs, including alternative formats and communication methods. Assistance is available for anyone who requires help to make a complaint, and we can signpost to independent advocacy services if needed.

8. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be recorded and considered where there is sufficient information to investigate. Full responses may not be possible without contact details.

9. Time Limits

Complaints should normally be made within 12 months of the event. Complaints received after this time may still be considered if there is good reason for the delay.

10. Complaint Procedure Stages

Our complaints process has two formal stages. We aim to deal with all complaints fairly, consistently, and within the timescales set out below. Where it is not possible to meet these timescales, we will keep you informed throughout the process. During the complaint investigation if a remedy needs to be taken, we will not wait until the conclusion of the complaint to action a remedy.

Stage 1 – Formal Complaint

At this stage, the complaint will be investigated by the relevant service area.

- We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of receipt.
- For corporate complaints, we will provide a response within 15 working days (extensions may be agreed for up to an additional 10 working days, with an explanation provided).
- For housing landlord complaints, we will provide a response within 10 working days (extensions may be agreed for up to an additional 10 working days, with an explanation provided).

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, you may request a review under Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Review

If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 outcome, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed.

- Requests for escalation must be made within 20 working days of receiving your Stage 1 response.

- A senior officer or Assistant Director will carry out an independent review and provide a written response within 20 working days.
- In some cases, an extension of up to an additional 20 working days may be required; if this happens, we will inform you of the delay and explain the reasons.

If we decide not to escalate your complaint, we will clearly explain why and set out the reasons for our decision.

Where a response to a complaint falls outside the timescales in this procedure, we will keep you informed about the progress of your complaint throughout the process and provide updates at agreed intervals.

This is the Council's final stage in the complaints procedure.

11. Outcomes and Learning

Where something has gone wrong we will acknowledge this and set out the actions we have taken, or intend to take, to put things right. These can include:

- Apologising.
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong.
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons.
- Taking action if there has been delay.
- Reconsidering or changing a decision.
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum.
- Providing a financial remedy.
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

If your complaint is upheld, we will:

- Apologise and explain what went wrong.
- Take action to put things right.
- Consider appropriate remedies or compensation.
- Use the learning to improve services.

Complaint trends and learning are reported to senior management and Members to support service improvement.

12. Unreasonable or Persistent Behaviour

Where complainant behaviour is unreasonable, persistent or abusive, we may apply our Unreasonable and Vexatious Complainants Policy. This may include limiting contact or communication channels. Any restrictions will be applied fairly and proportionately.

13. Escalation to the Ombudsman

If you remain dissatisfied after Stage 2, you may refer your complaint to the appropriate Ombudsman.

Housing Landlord Complaints

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

 0300 111 3000

 www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

You may approach the Housing Ombudsman for advice at any stage, but they normally expect you to complete both Council stages first.

Corporate Complaints

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH

 0300 061 0614

 www.lgo.org.uk

14. Complaints About Council Staff or Members

- Complaints about staff conduct may be referred to internal HR procedures after initial investigation.
- Complaints about elected Members are handled under the Members' Code of Conduct and should be submitted via the Council's Standards Procedure.

15. Publication and Review

This procedure is published on the Council's website and available in accessible formats on request. It is reviewed annually to ensure continued compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (2024) and LGSCO good practice guidance.