

South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee

Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

Introduction

The South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our services. We aim to clarify any issues you may be unsure about. If possible, we'll put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you're entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we did something wrong, we'll apologise and, where possible, try to put things right for you. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain from comments, compliments and complaints to improve our services.

The Feedback Scheme

The CJC recognises the importance of working together with our residents to better understand the needs of our communities.

The Feedback Scheme provides an opportunity for both residents and visitors to the region to tell the CJC what we do well, make suggestions for improvements and if dissatisfied with a service, to make a complaint. All feedback received is reviewed and themes are scrutinised to identify where improvements are needed and good practice is highlighted and shared across services.

The information enables us to evaluate whether we are providing services well and where we need to make improvements.

There are various ways that you can give us feedback which are detailed below.

Compliments

If you have experienced a good service from the CJC, had a good experience at one of our events or want to praise one of our staff for doing a good job you can use the Feedback Scheme to make a compliment.

Compliments are important as it enables us to evaluate how well our services are being delivered and recognise staff who may go over and above what is expected to give a positive experience. We share and promote examples of good practice across service areas and use your feedback to understand what is important to our customers.

Comments

If you have a suggestion as to how the CJC could improve or want to comment, good or bad, about any aspect of CJC Services you can do so through the Feedback Scheme. All comments are looked at and considered by the relevant service areas.

You can make a comment or compliment in the following ways:

- Request a copy of our feedback form from the member of staff you are already in contact with.
- Use the feedback form on our website at: www.cardiffcapitalregion.gov.uk
- E-mail us at: feedback@cardiffcapitalregion.gov.uk
- Write a letter to us at: Feedback, Cardiff Capital Region, Sbarc, Maindy Road, Cardiff, CF24 4HQ

Whilst we encourage both compliments and comments it is not possible to respond to each one that we receive. Compliments and comments received online will be acknowledged automatically but other communications may not generate a response. All compliments and comments made through the methods detailed at the end of this policy are however, logged and considered.

When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal-so, rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal.

Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us or services that we do not provide.-If this is the case, we will let you know and provide advice on which organisation you should direct your concern to.

The Corporate Complaints process is not able to address a complaint regarding a Councillor. All Councillors at the CJC are subject to a Code of Conduct. Formal complaints that a Councillor may have breached this Code should be addressed to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman's web site contains explanations on the standards of behaviour expected by the Code and the basis on which the Ombudsman decides whether or not to investigate a complaint.

This policy does not apply to 'Freedom of Information' or data access issues. Please contact InfoRights@cardiffcapitalregion.gov.uk or write to Info Rights, Cardiff Capital Region, Sbarc, Maindy Road, Cardiff, CF24 4HQ.

Complaints Officers can advise on the type and scope of complaints they can consider

Asking us to provide a service?

If you are approaching us to request a service for the first time this policy doesn't apply. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

Making a complaint

You can make your complaint in any of the following ways:

Form: Ask for a copy of our form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern formally.

Website: Use the form on our website at www.cardiffcapitalregion.gov.uk

Email: Feedback@cardiffcapitalregion.gov.uk

Writing to: Cardiff Capital Region
Sbarc|Spark, Maindy Road
Cardiff
CF24 4HQ

Copies of this policy and the complaint form are available in Welsh on our website and will be made available in alternative languages and in other formats, such as audio and large print, on request.

Dealing with your complaint

- We will formally acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability such as hearing or vision loss.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 6 months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may in exceptional circumstances be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. You will however have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than 12 months ago.

There are two stages to the CJC's complaints procedure:

- A **Stage 1** complaint (also referred to as informal resolution) is the quickest and often the most effective way of dealing with your complaint. Unless a complaint is of a very serious nature, we expect all complaints to be dealt with initially at Stage 1.
- A **Stage 2** complaint enables you to escalate the matter if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1. Stage 2 complaints will be dealt with by a senior officer within the CJC and may be independent to the service your complaint relates to.

The CJC reserves the right to escalate serious matters straight to Stage 2 should it feel this is necessary based on the nature and seriousness of the complaint raised.

Stage 1 (also referred to as Informal resolution)

Wherever possible we believe it's best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the officer or team you are or have been dealing with. If possible they may be able to resolve the issue for you there and then.

If this is not possible and the matter requires further investigation, the relevant service area will look at the complaint and provide a response within 10 working days.

As a minimum standard we expect the response to your complaint to:

- Offer an apology where appropriate
- Advise what action is to be taken to put things right
- Identify any lessons learnt; and
- Provide information on what to do if you remain dissatisfied.

Stage 2 (also referred to as formal resolution)

Should you remain dissatisfied with the response to your complaint at Stage 1 and we have been unable to provide a resolution to the issues you have raised you can request that your complaint be considered at Stage 2.

Occasionally specific complaint issues may warrant clarification, for example when written complaints are long, unspecific, or when complex complaints taken by telephone have been noted and require clarification. In such circumstances the Investigating Officer will contact you with a complaint summary as they see it, to agree/clarify issues prior to investigation.

Should you fail to respond and agree/clarify issues within 28 days, the complaint will be closed and a letter to this effect will be sent to you.

Dealing with your Stage 2 Complaint

We will formally acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and will usually reply to you in the same way you communicated with us. For example, if you complained by email in

Welsh, we would respond by email in Welsh, unless you inform us that you have different requirements.

Once received your complaint will be managed by a Complaints Co-ordinator for the service area that your complaint relates to. They will appoint a senior officer from the service or in some instances an officer from another service to undertake an investigation.

The Investigating Officer will review the information provided at Stage 1 and may contact you to clarify matters and to discuss your desired outcome. They may also discuss the situation with CJC staff and for some complaints may need to look at information we hold on you.

If you are not happy for the Investigating Officer to view information we hold on you then you should let us know when you make your complaint. It is possible that refusal to allow access to information we hold may mean that we cannot continue to investigate some or all of the issues you have raised.

Our commitment when dealing with complaints is to find a resolution wherever possible and if the officer looking at your complaint can identify a simple solution to the issue(s) raised they may contact you with their proposed resolution and try to reach an agreement rather than proceeding with an investigation.

We aim to deal with complaints as quickly as possible and deal with the vast majority at Stage 2 within 20 working days. With more complex complaints and/or complaints that involve more than one service area, it may take longer to carry out a full and thorough investigation. If this is the case, we will contact you to agree a revised timescale which should be no longer than 3 months following the date of your original complaint.

On completion of your complaint, we will provide you with a formal written response detailing our findings and explaining how we reached our conclusions. We will accept our mistakes where we have made them and will always apologise where appropriate to do so. If, as part of the investigation of your complaint, we identify failings, we will explain how we plan to put things right and/or make improvements to prevent a similar occurrence in the future.

Putting Things Right

If we did not provide you with a service you should have received, we will aim to provide it if that's possible. If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right.

If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in had we got the matter right.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, when we should have provided it for you, or if you were entitled to funding you did not receive, we will usually aim to make good what you have lost.

When there is more than one body involved

If your complaint covers more than one body, for example, the CJC and one of its Constituent Councils, we will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with the matter. You will then be notified of the officer responsible for communicating with you while your complaint is being considered.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf, for example, a specialist company contracted by the CJC, you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, should you wish to raise the matter with us on a formal basis, we will look into the complaint and respond to you.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all public bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a poor service as a result of a failure on the part of the body providing it.
- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

You can contact the Ombudsman by:

Phone: 0300 790 0203

Email: ask@ombudsman.wales

Website: www.ombudsman.wales

Writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office deals with complaints about services in Welsh. We can advise you about such organisations.

Learning lessons

We take complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes that we have made. Our Senior Leadership Team and Governance and Audit Sub-Committee will consider a 6 monthly summary of all complaints received, plus details of any serious complaints with recommendations where service improvements have been identified.

What if you need help?

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.

Older People

If you are over the age of 60, you can get advice and assistance from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, whose contact details are:

Phone: 03442 640670

Email: ask@olderpeople.wales

Website: www.olderpeople.wales

Writing to: The Older People's Commissioner for Wales,
Cambrian Buildings,
Mount Stuart Square,
Butetown,
Cardiff
CF10 5FL

Children and Young People

If you are under the age of 18 you can get advice and assistance from Meic or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales:

Meic Helpline:

Phone: 0808 802 3456

Text: 84001

Website: www.meiccydmru.org

Children's Commissioner for Wales:

Phone: 0808 801 1000

Email: post@childcomwales.org.uk

Website: www.childcomwales.org.uk

What we expect from you

We accept that in times of trouble or distress, people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.