

Complaints Procedure Customer Guide

Complaints procedure

Stirling Council is committed to providing quality services that reflect the needs of our customers.

We value complaints and use 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.

You can get in touch with us through a variety of methods as described at the back of this leaflet.

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.

Services provided on the Council's behalf

Your complaint may be about a service being provided on behalf of the Council.

Our service providers require to have their own complaints procedure which mirrors our complaints procedure and they are expected to provide complaints performance information to the Council.

Customers using these services are normally encouraged to use the provider's complaints procedure. As an alternative, and in certain circumstances, you can request that your complaint is routed through the Council.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things 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 anti-social 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 against the decision.
- If your planning application is refused, you have a right of appeal to Scottish Ministers within 6 months of the decision.
- If you believe your house is incorrectly valued for council tax, you can appeal to the Assessor.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give 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 any of the following ways:

- **Online:** comments, compliments & complaints form <http://my.stirling.gov.uk/contact#contact-form>
- **Phone:** 01786 404040 calls are recorded to help improve services (Translation Services available)
- **Email:** info@stirling.gov.uk
- **Post:** Freepost Stirling Council Complaints, Viewforth
14-20 Pitt Terrace, Stirling FK8 2ET

We will try to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible.

When complaining, please tell us:

- your full name, address, phone number and/or email address
- as much detail as possible about the complaint
- what has gone wrong and what you would like us to do to put it right

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within 6 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.

What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint and when you should expect to receive a reply.

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage 1: frontline 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 immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in 5 working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

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 2. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

Stage 2: investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 working days
- where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you
- 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.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still 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 completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so 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.
- complaints from Community Councils (a Community Council is not a “member of the public” under the terms of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 and so the SPSO cannot accept complaints from Community Councils. Community Councils may, however, complain on behalf of a member of the public with the person’s written consent for the Community Council to act for them).

You can contact the SPSO:

In person:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

By post:

Freepost SPSO
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

Freephone: 0800 377 7330 or call 0131 225 5300

Online contact: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

Mobile site: www.spsso.org.uk

Social Work complaints

All complaints made about Social Work services are responded to through our 2 stage complaint handling process described in this leaflet.

In addition, for services that are registered with the Care Inspectorate, including registered services provided on our behalf by another agency, you can choose to make your complaint to the Care Inspectorate or to the agency directly.

Contact details for the Care Inspectorate can be found on their website: www.careinspectorate.com

Telephone: 0845 600 9527

complete an online complaints form at
www.careinspectorate.com

Email: enquiries@careinspectorate.com

Schools, Learning and Education Service complaints

Schools, Learning and Education Service complaints should be referred to the school in the first instance as a Stage 1 complaint. If the complaint is not resolved at School level it can be escalated to a formal investigation by asking the Head of School or Nursery to move the complaint to Stage 2 or by emailing: info@stirling.gov.uk

Procurement complaints

Please contact the Council's procurement team in the first instance by emailing: procurement@stirling.gov.uk

Further advice on making a complaint about procurement is available from the Scottish Government's Single Point of Enquiry <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Procurement/Selling/supplier-enquiries>

Factoring complaints

If you have a complaint about our property management service and are not happy with how we have investigated it and responded to you, you can contact the Housing and Property Chamber. They work to resolve complaints and disputes between home owners and their property managers/factors. The HOPC can be contacted on 0141 302 5900 or by emailing HPCAdmin@scotcourtribals.gov.uk.

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 for you.

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

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: 0131 524 1975

Website: www.siaa.org.uk

Equal Opportunities

Stirling Council is committed to ensuring that no one is discriminated against on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or for any other reason. If you think you have been treated less favourably, please make this clear in your complaint.

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 trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or braille, contact us on **01786 404040**.

Our contact details

Please contact us by the following means:

- **Online:** comments, compliments & complaints form <http://my.stirling.gov.uk/contact#contact-form>
- **Phone:** 01786 404040 calls are recorded to help improve services
- **Email:** info@stirling.gov.uk
- **Post:** Freepost, Stirling Council Complaints, Viewforth 14-20 Pitt Terrace, Stirling FK8 2ET

Our online, phone and email options are available 24 hours a day each day of the year (there is no separate out of hours emergency number)

Quick guide to our complaints procedure

Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint in person, online, 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 1: frontline resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within 5 working days if we can.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2.

Stage 2: investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1. 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 3 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.

If you need help or this information
supplied in an alternative format
please call 01786 404040.

