

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **CUSTOMER FEEDBACK SCHEME**

### **COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY**

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## **Introduction**

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is committed to providing the best possible services to customers, residents and visitors to the Borough. We pride ourselves on delivering services well and having staff that are committed to doing a good job. We recognise that on occasions either the delivery or quality of our services may fall short or exceed both ours and/or our customers' expectations and when this happens we want our residents, customers and visitors to let us know.

As a Council we value all customer feedback good or bad and use this information to both improve and develop services to meet the needs of both customers and local communities. This policy outlines the Council's process for dealing with complaints and other customer feedback such as compliments and comments and explains what we do with the feedback we receive.

## **The Customer Feedback Scheme**

Rhondda Cynon Taf recognise the importance of working together with our residents to better understand the needs of our communities.

The Customer Feedback Scheme provides an opportunity for both residents and visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf to tell the Council 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 from customers enables us to evaluate whether we are providing essential services well and where we need to make improvements.

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

## **Compliments and Comments**

### **Compliments**

If you have experienced a good service from the Council, 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 Customer 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 residents and visitors 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 Council could improve or want to comment, good or bad, about any aspect of Council Services you can do so through the Customer 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.
- Contact us by telephone: 01443 425005.
- Use the feedback form on our website at: [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk)
- E-mail us at: [feedback@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@rctcbc.gov.uk)
- Write a letter to us at : Customer Feedback, BSU, Ty Elai, Williamstown, Tonypany, RCT, CF40 1NY

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, given the number that are received 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.

## **Complaints**

We acknowledge that despite our best efforts sometimes things go wrong and when this happens we want to put things right.

As a Council Rhondda Cynon Taf is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service and aim to put right any mistakes as quickly as we can. If we have got things wrong or failed to deliver a service that you are entitled to then we will apologise and try and put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

Whilst we are committed to resolving complaints it is not always possible to meet every customer's expectations. As a Council we have to adapt to changes in society, take account of financial pressures and prioritise. This can mean that services and the way we deliver them also has to adapt to ensure that we are making best use of resources whilst continuing to meet the needs of our customers and the most vulnerable in our communities.

## **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, for example against a refusal to grant you planning permission or the decision not to give your child a place in a particular school 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.

This policy does not apply to complaints about Social Services. These are dealt with separately under a different policy, guidance and legislation.

Complaints regarding a school are also dealt with under separate procedures and in the first instance you should approach the Head Teacher of the school concerned.

## **Have you asked us yet?**

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time, (e.g. reporting a faulty street light, requesting an appointment etc) then this policy does not apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service and are then 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:

- Request a copy of our feedback form from the member of staff you are already in contact with. Tell them that you want us to deal with the matter formally.
  - Contact us by telephone to make your complaint on: 01443 425005.
  - Use the feedback form on our website at: [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk)
  - E-mail us at: [feedback@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@rctcbc.gov.uk)
  - Write a letter to us at : Customer Feedback, BSU, Ty Elai, Williamstown, Tonypany, RCT, CF40 1NY
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- Visit one of our One4all Centres based in Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Porth, Pontypridd or Treorchy. We aim to have complaint forms available at all of our reception areas, libraries and other Council run facilities. Copies of this policy and the complaint form will be made

available in alternative languages, audio, large print and Braille, upon 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 complaint 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 Council'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 Council and may be independent to the service your complaint relates to.

The Council reserve 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 service 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 Council 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 it is 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 a service you should have received, we will aim to provide it if that is 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, which you should have received from us, 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 e.g. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and South Wales Police, 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 considered.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf, for example, a specialist company contracted by the Authority you may wish to raise the matter 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.

## **Welsh Language Complaints**

Welsh Language, Standards & Compliance.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework to impose duties on certain organisations to comply with standards in relation to the Welsh language by way of sub-legislation (Welsh Language Regulation Standards). The standards issued to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council are listed in 'Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Compliance Notice – Section 44 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011'. All our standards, including Service Delivery, Policy Making & Operational are available to view, online at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WelshServices](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WelshServices) or at any of our reception centres.

Complaints or Concerns regarding the Welsh Language will follow the timeframes and steps highlighted in the Council's policy. The Council, as this policy has already referred to, will make sure that the investigating officers consult with any relevant legislation before determining whether the authority or service area has acted in accordance with legislative requirements or in line with approved policies and procedures.

Officers are aware of the Welsh Language Standards having attended training, and this Complaints and Concerns Policy via briefings. Officers will follow this corporate approach when dealing with a complaint concerning the Welsh Language and our Standards and are able to consult with the authority's Compliance Officer and Service Manager for the Welsh Language for further advice.

If you feel that the complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily or that someone is interfering with your freedom to use Welsh, you may complain directly to the Welsh Language Commissioner. You can contact the Welsh Language Commissioner by:

- Phone: 0845 6033221
- Email: [post@welshlanguagecommissioner.org](mailto:post@welshlanguagecommissioner.org)
- Writing to: The Welsh Language Commissioner, Market Chambers, 5-7 St Mary Street, Cardiff CF10 1AT

Alternatively call in to any of our reception centres who hold a copy of the Commissioners Guide to making a complaint.

## **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:

- telephone: 0300 790 0203
- e-mail: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)
- writing to: The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales,  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae,  
Pencoed  
CF35 5LJ

## **Learning Lessons**

We take complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes that we have made. All service improvements identified from complaints are logged and monitored by the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team and examples of these will be made publicly available.

Our Corporate Management Team and Cabinet will consider a 6 monthly summary of all complaints received, plus details of any serious complaints with recommendations where service improvements have been identified.

## **Further Help**

If you are dealing with a member of Council staff they can help you make your complaint 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:

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

Telephone No: 02920 445 030 (local rate) or 08442 640 670 (standard rate), or by Fax No: 08442 640 680.

### **Children and Young People**

If you are under the age of 18 you can get advice and assistance from are still unhappy or need further help, you can contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales, whose contact details are:

01792 765600 (South Wales)  
01492 523333 (North Wales)

[post@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:post@childcomwales.org.uk)  
[www.childcom.org.uk](http://www.childcom.org.uk)

**South Wales Office:**  
Oystermouth House  
Phoenix Way  
Llansamlet  
Swansea  
SA7 9FS

**North Wales Office:**  
Penrhos Manor  
Oak Drive  
Colwyn Bay  
Conwy  
LL29 7YW

### **What We Expect From You When Dealing With Your Complaint**

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. Such behaviour is not considered unacceptable just because it is forceful or determined.

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

We will invoke our Unreasonably Persistent Customer policy to manage situations when a person's behaviour in relation to their complaint is considered unreasonable or unacceptable, or when the nature/ frequency of their contact takes up a disproportionate amount of time.

## APPENDIX A

### Complaint/ Concern form

#### A: Your details

Surname	Forename(s):	Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms - if other please state:
Address and postcode: (to receive letter response)		
Your e-mail address:		
Daytime contact phone number		
Mobile number:		

Please state by which of the above methods you would prefer us to contact you.

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#### Your requirements

If our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example, if English or Welsh is not your first language, or you need to engage with us in a particular way, for example, if you have a sight impairment and would prefer to receive a daisy disc, please tell us so that we can confirm the most accessible form of contact with you.

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. However, if you are completing it on behalf of someone else, please also fill in section B, below. Before taking the complaint forward we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned.

#### **B: Making a concern or a complaint on behalf of someone else: *Their Details.***

Their name in full:	
Address and postcode:	
What is your relationship to them?	

Why are you raising a concern/ making a complaint on their behalf?	
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**C: About your complaint/concern - please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary.**

C.1 Name of the department/section/service you are complaining about:

C.2 What do you think they did wrong, or failed to do?

C.3 Describe how you have personally suffered or adversely affected.

C.4 What do you think should be done to put things right?

C.5 When did you first become aware of the problem?

C.6 Have you already put your complaint/concern to frontline staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.

C.7 If it is more than 12 months since you first became aware of the problem, please give the reason(s) why you have not complained before now.

If you have any documents to support your complaint/concern, please attach them with this form.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

When you have completed this form, please send it to:

Customer Feedback c/o BSU

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council,

Ty Elai

Williamstown

Tonypandy

CF40 1NY

Alternatively, email a copy to: [feedback@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@rctcbc.gov.uk)