

The purpose of a complaints system is to put right what has gone wrong and to learn from it.

Principles for effective complaint handling

Accessibility
Communication
Timeliness
Fairness
Credibility
Accountability

Features of an effective complaints procedure

Accessibility

It is well publicised.

It is easily accessed and understood, by staff and by the public.

Communication

It includes early direct contact with the person making the complaint and continued contact through the complaints process.

There is effective communication between council staff and between the council and its partners regarding complaints.

There is effective communication where the complaint involves more than one body.

There is an effective recording and feedback loop so that improvements can be made.

Timeliness

It takes no longer than 12 weeks from receipt to resolution.

Fairness

It is clear about roles and responsibilities.

Complaints are dealt with in an open-minded and impartial way.

Responses are proportionate; one size does not fit all.

Credibility

It is managed by someone who can take an overview and can implement changes in the complaints system.

It includes a robust review by someone who has the independence and authority to ask questions, get at the facts and recommend changes in response to complaints.

There is effective leadership that ensures that the complaints system and learning from it has a high profile across the council.

Accountability

Information is provided in a clear and open way and is properly managed.

There is follow-up to ensure any decisions are properly and promptly implemented.

There is regular monitoring to ensure timescales and satisfaction levels are met.

There is periodic review of the process, to keep it up to date and keep the public informed.