

Corporate Complaints Policy

Based on the Complaints Standards
Agency model policy

Version 5.1

Date of Issue: 28 May 2026 | Review Date: 28 May 2027
(Annual Review Cycle)



sirgar.llyw.cymru
carmarthenshire.gov.wales

Contents

Preface	3
Equalities Statement	3
What you can expect from us.....	3
When to use this policy	4
Social Care Services Complaints	4
Freedom of Information Complaints.....	4
Insurance Claims Against the Council.....	5
Asking us to provide a service?	5
How to make a complaint	6
Complaints in Relation to the Welsh Language Standards.....	6
Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	6
Investigating your complaint.....	7
What if there is more than one body involved?	7
What if you need help?	7
What we expect from you	8
Stage 1 - informal resolution	8
Stage 2 – formal investigation	9
Outcome	10
Putting things right	10
Learning lessons	10
The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales	10
Appendix A: Complaint form	12

Preface

This policy is based on the model policy outlined by the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) which is designed for public services providers in Wales. It represents a minimum standard of complaint handling for public bodies in Wales.

The policy is fully compatible with the Welsh Language Standards Regulations.

Please note that NHS bodies in Wales adhere to the National Health Service (Concerns, Complaints and Redress Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2011, known as 'Putting Things Right'.

When the content of this policy conflicts with the Putting Things Right regulations, the Putting Things Right regulations will take precedence, including when references are made to timescales.

Also, the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 outline the procedure for handling complaints about Social Services issues in Wales.

Equalities Statement

All employees are required to adopt a positive, open and fair approach and ensure the Authority's Equality and Diversity Policy is adhered to and applied consistently to all irrespective of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, disability, religion and belief or non-belief, age, sex, gender reassignment, gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marital or civil partnership status.

In addition, the Welsh Language Standards ask us to 'ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language' and this principle should be adopted in the application of this policy.

What you can expect from us

Carmarthenshire County Council is committed to dealing effectively with any 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 complaints to improve our services.

When to use this policy

When you complain to us, we will usually respond to you as set out in this policy.

However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal, examples include, but aren't limited to:

- Planning decisions
- Parking fines
- A decision not to give your child a place in a particular school.

In cases like this, rather than investigate your complaint, we will explain to you how you can appeal.

Where there are ongoing legal proceedings or another type of investigation, we may need to put a complaint "on hold" until these are concluded.

Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not covered by this policy. Examples include, but aren't limited to:

- Insurance claims
- Complaints about a School, County Councillor, Town or Community Councils
- Complaints about Social Services
- Employment issues, including complaints about Council employees outside of the workplace which don't relate to the delivery of a service
- Reports of anti-social behaviour
- Allegations of serious officer misconduct and criminal activity

The Complaints Team will be happy to advise you about how to pursue a complaint like this and can also give clear advice about the type and scope of complaints we can consider.

Social Care Services Complaints

For specific information on how to make a complaint regarding Social Services please visit our webpage:

<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-services/social-care-health/social-care-services-complaints-compliments/#.YK55WI2Sk2x>

Freedom of Information Complaints

This policy does not apply to Freedom of Information, Subject Access or other information rights issues.

Please contact foia@carmarthenshire.gov.uk in relation to these matters.

Insurance Claims Against the Council

If you are seeking compensation from the Council, this falls outside our Corporate Complaints Policy.

We have a dedicated, step-by-step claims page which explains:

- When an insurance claim may apply
- What evidence is needed
- How to submit a claim without using a solicitor or paying fees
- Typical time limits and how claims are investigated

To make sure your enquiry is dealt with correctly, please visit the Local Authority Insurance Claims page:

<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/council-services/local-authority-insurance-claims/>

Asking us to provide a service?

If you are approaching us to request a service, for example reporting a faulty streetlight, or ordering blue bags, this policy doesn't apply. To request a service, you can:

- Find the service you would like to report on our Report It page:
<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/council-services/report/>
- Find the service you would like to apply for on our Apply/Request page:
<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/council-services/apply-request/>
- If neither of the above show the service you are looking for, contact our Contact Centre on 01267 234567, Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 6:00pm

However, if you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your complaint known as explained below.

How to make a complaint

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

- Use the form on our website at https://myaccount.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/en/service/Complaints_Compliments_and_Comments_External
- Ask for a copy of our form from the person with whom you are already in contact.
- Get in touch with our Contact Centre Team on 01267 234567 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- Write to us at: Complaints Team, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP

We aim to have complaint forms available at all our customer service centres, public areas and at appropriate locations in our libraries and leisure centres.

Copies of this policy and the complaint form are available in Welsh and in other languages, as audio and large print upon request.

Complaints in Relation to the Welsh Language Standards

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).

Any complaints in relation to the Welsh language or services provided through the medium of Welsh will follow the same approach identified throughout this policy. All Welsh language complaints are reported in the council's annual Welsh language standards report.

All the information relating to Carmarthenshire County Council's implementation of the standards and annual reports can be viewed online:

<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/council-democracy/strategies-plans-and-policies/welsh-language-standards/>

You are welcome to express your complaint to us through the medium of Welsh.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

We are aware that many complainants are submitting information assisted by AI. While complainants are entitled to choose how they submit, review and respond to our correspondence, we would like to advise that AI-generated content can sometimes include false or unsupported claims.

To maintain the integrity and reliability of communications with us, we advise that any AI generated material is verified before including it in your responses. This will help to avoid any potential misinterpretations or the inclusion of incorrect information.

Investigating 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 requirements, for example, if you need documents in large type.
- 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 made a complaint.

Normally, we will only consider complaints that are brought to our attention within 12 months of you becoming aware of the issue.

We may consider complaints raised after this time where there are good reasons for the delay and where it remains possible to investigate the matter fairly and effectively.

In deciding whether to accept a late complaint, we will consider the individual circumstances of the case, including the reasons for the delay and the availability of relevant evidence.

If you're expressing a complaint on behalf of somebody else, we'll need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

What if there is more than one body involved?

If your complaint covers more than one body for example, a Housing Association and the Council regarding the handling of a noise nuisance issue, we will usually work with them to decide who should take the lead in dealing with your complaint. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf for example, a housing repair contractor, the operators of a Household Waste Recycling Centre or a town centre public convenience, you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to make your complaint formally, we will investigate this ourselves and respond to you.

What if you need help?

Our staff will aim to 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. You may wish to

contact organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Cymru or Shelter who may be able to assist you.

You can also use this complaints policy if you are under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline:

- Phone 0808 802 3456
- Website www.meiccymru.org

or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Contact details are:

- Phone 0808 801 1000
- Email post@childcomwales.org.uk
- Website www.childcom.org.uk

What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some 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. We have a separate policy to manage situations when we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

Stage 1 - informal resolution

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away. If you have a complaint, please raise it with the person you're dealing with. They will try to resolve it for you there and then.

The Complaints Team is notified of all complaints and will assist with co-ordinating a response.

At this stage, we'll aim to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible and within 10 working days. However, where complaints are particularly complex or involve a broader scope of issues, this timescale may be extended where reasonable, and you will be kept informed of progress.

If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your complaint, the member of staff that dealt with your complaint will draw them to the Complaints Team's attention.

If it is not possible to resolve your complaint at this stage, you can then ask for a formal investigation.

Stage 2 – formal investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to investigate your complaint. If your complaint is straightforward, we'll usually ask somebody from the relevant service area to investigate it and respond to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere in the Council or in certain cases we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we are right. We'll also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

We will aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days. If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- Let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate.
- Tell you how long we expect it to take.
- Let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- Give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your complaint will firstly aim to establish the facts.

The extent of the investigation will depend upon how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet with you to discuss your complaint.

Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

We'll look at relevant evidence. This could include information you have provided, our case files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your complaint. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies, any legal entitlement and guidance.

Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we find. If necessary, we will produce a report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we made a mistake, we will tell you what happened and why.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we make a mistake, we will always apologise for it.

Putting things right

If we did not provide you with a service, you should have had, we will aim to provide it now, if that's possible. If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out because of a mistake on our part, we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had done things properly.

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 try to refund the cost.

Learning lessons

We take your complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made. Our Corporate Management Team considers a summary of all complaints quarterly and is made aware of all serious complaints. Our Scrutiny Committees also consider our response to complaints twice a year. We share summary (anonymised) information on complaints received and complaints outcomes with the Ombudsman as part of our commitment to accountability and learning from complaints.

Where there is a need for significant change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it. We will let you know when changes we have promised to you have been made.

The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales

If we fail in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can investigate your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the service provider.

- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman normally expects you to bring your complaint to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- Phone: 0300 790 0203
- The website: www.ombudsman.wales
- Writing to:
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ

Appendix A: Complaint form

This form can be completed online by visiting our website:

https://myaccount.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/en/service/Complaints_Compliments_and_Comments_External

Please Note: The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in Section B.

A: Your details

Please state how you would prefer us to contact you:

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, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

Surname	Forenames	Title
Address and postcode		
Email address		
Daytime contact telephone number		

B: Making a complaint on behalf of someone else: Their details:

Please note that we must be satisfied that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person who has experienced the problem.

Their name in full	
Address and postcode	
What is your relationship with them?	
Why are you making the complaint on their behalf?	

C: About your complaint (please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary)

The name of the department/section/service you are complaining about:

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

Please describe how you personally have suffered or have been affected:

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

When did you first become aware of the problem?

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

If it is more than six months since you first became aware of the problem, please say why you have not complained before now:

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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

Complaints Team, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP