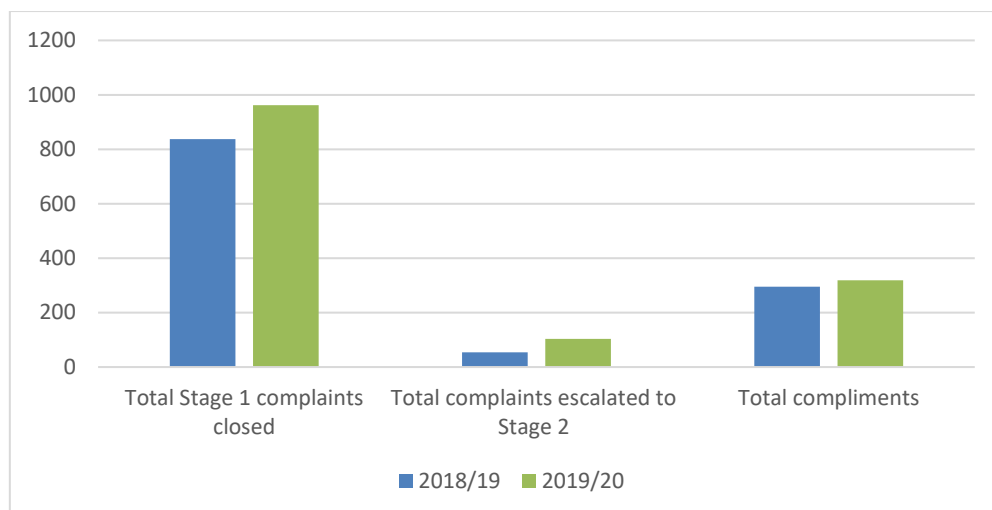


# Customer Feedback

## Complaints, comments and compliments

Katie Williams, Corporate Customer Feedback Manager





Our Customer Feedback Policy reflects MKC’s commitment to valuing complaints, comments and compliments. Customer feedback provides a first-hand account of our customer’s views and experience, and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. The information gathered can be used to improve customer satisfaction and our Customer Feedback Policy is an integral part of the Council’s learning and development.

Our approach to handling feedback is led by the Council’s three key values; we are dedicated, we are respectful and we are collaborative.

We will use feedback from our customers to drive improvements in the way we operate and welcome both negative and positive comments.

We accept complaints, comments and compliments from everyone who lives in, works in or visits the borough of Milton Keynes and uses Council Services. We accept complaints from people acting on behalf of someone else such as councillors, members of parliament (MPs) and representatives (carers or advocates).



## Complaints

As a guideline our general definition of a complaint is:

“A clear expression of dissatisfaction about a Council service (whether that service is provided directly by the Council or by a contractor or partner) including; the standard of service, action or lack of action, decision taken by the Council, or the way in which staff carry out their duties.”

The following are examples of complaints:

- If a matter has already been reported to the Council and the work has not been completed, or it has taken longer than we said it would take.
- When we have not provided a service to the standard stated.
- Not answering a customer’s question or delivering a service.
- A delay in taking action without a good reason.
- Giving incorrect or misleading information.
- Staff who are rude or unhelpful.
- Not following our own policies, rules or procedures.
- A decision without consideration of all of the facts.
- Discrimination or harassment on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race or sexual orientation.

A complaint is **not**:

- A housing repair, requesting that a hedge is trimmed, some litter picking up, etc.
- Freedom of Information or Data Protection requests.
- A request for compensation.
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision.
- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal.
- Matters of law or Central Government Policy or their interpretation.
- Complaints about staffing appointments, dismissals, pay, conduct and other Human Resource policy and procedures.
- Commercial or contract matters.
- Complaints that are following a judicial process or legal process (such as a planning decision).
- Wanting information or an explanation of a council policy or practice.

- An appeal against a Planning application, a Housing application, a Benefit award decision, a parking ticket or statutory notices (these are dealt with under other procedures).
- Complaints about licenses, permits, approvals, consents, permissions or registrations or any related enforcement actions (these are dealt with under other procedures).
- Complaints made by members of staff against other members of staff that are covered under others policies such as the Whistle Blowing policy, Dignity and Respect at work etc.
- Complaints against members/councillors conduct (these are covered under a separate code of conduct).

We want to resolve an issue before it becomes a complaint and seek **early resolution**:

When a customer contacts MKC because they are dissatisfied, all officers should take responsibility and ownership to resolve the issue(s) raised, at the earliest opportunity and as close to the point of service delivery as possible.

If we are unable to resolve a customer's dissatisfaction, there is a two stage complaints process to follow.

**Stage One:** Stage One complaints will be investigated formally by a manager within the service to which the complaint principally relates and in most cases problems can be sorted out quickly.

**Stage Two:** All complaints which are referred for escalation to Stage Two will be considered by the Corporate Customer Feedback Team to be clear exactly what was investigated at Stage One, and to ensure that the customer understands the investigations scope.

If it is deemed that the Council's response will stay the same we may confirm a final decision at Stage One. When this happens complainants will be informed of their rights to refer the complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

If a complaint is escalated to Stage Two, it will be allocated to a senior manager within the service area or if appropriate, to an independent senior manager who will carry out a further investigation of the complaint.

**Time limit for making complaints:** We will not normally consider a complaint that is made more than twelve months after the customer first became aware of the issue they want to complain about. This is in line with good practice as operated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.



**Withdrawing a complaint:** A complaint can be withdrawn in person, over the telephone or in writing at any time by the customer. The withdrawal of a complaint will be acknowledged in writing.

**Complaints Resolution:** MKC aims to resolve complaints by putting things right where there has been a failure. Our approach will be fair and consistent across all the complaints we uphold.

**Alternative restorative approaches:** When dealing with customer dissatisfaction the focus will always be on resolution. This may mean that alternative methods to the complaints procedure above could be considered such as conciliation or mediation.

## Comments & Compliments

MKC is committed to providing high quality services. We are always looking for ideas on how to improve things and recognising when we have done things well. Comments and compliments are another form of customer feedback which provides an opportunity for identifying service areas strengths and weaknesses and learn and develop from this.

## Working together OneMK

This policy:

- Applies to all Council staff and the staff of organisations who deliver services on our behalf.
- Applies to anyone affected by our services who wishes to provide feedback.

We encourage customers to tell us about their experience, good or bad, and/or suggest ways to improve our service delivery. This feedback can help us to:

- improve our performance
- improve our business processes
- re-design our services
- train and develop our staff
- enhance our reputation
- share good practice

Milton Keynes Council has based its Customer Feedback Policy on 6 key principles:

1. **Accessibility** - Our policy is well publicised and easily accessible.

2. **Communication** - All customer feedback is acknowledged and as part of the complaints process Investigating Officers make early direct contact with the person making the complaint.
3. **Timeliness** - Our complaints process takes no longer than 12 weeks from receipt to resolution.
4. **Fairness** - Our policy is clear about roles and responsibilities and complaints are dealt with in an open-minded and impartial way.
5. **Credibility** - Our policy is managed by the Corporate Customer Feedback Manager who has the independence and authority to ask questions, get at the facts and recommend changes in response to complaints. Learning from customer feedback has a high profile across the Council.
6. **Accountability** - There is an effective recording system for customer feedback so that this can be monitored to ensure consistency, lessons can be learnt and improvements made.

Customer feedback is regularly monitored to ensure timescales and satisfaction levels are met via quarterly reviews.

Information is provided in a clear and open way and there is a follow-up to ensure that any decisions made as a result of an upheld complaint is properly and promptly implemented.

Please note there are separate policies for:

- Children's Social Care complaints investigated under Section 26 of the Children's Act 1989. Please refer to 'Getting the best from complaints' and the Children's Social Care complaints procedure flow chart.
- Adult Social Care complaints are investigated under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000. The procedure will follow this corporate policy taking in to consideration the Social Care Complaints Regulations 2009 where appropriate and ensuring timescales are agreed with the service user or their representative. Please refer to the Adult Social Care complaints procedure flow chart.
- Housing complaints are investigated under the Localism Act 2011. Milton Keynes Council tenants can request that an independent designated person (MP, Councillor or Tenant Panel) review their complaint relating to a landlord function provided by Milton Keynes Council once it has been investigated through our complaints procedure.

[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/complaints)