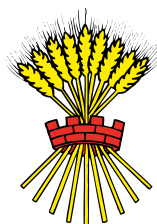


Complaints, compliments and feedback



HOW TO GET IN TOUCH, AND WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT WHEN YOU DO

RYEDALE
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Introduction

Ryedale District Council is committed to providing high-quality customer service, and we value your feedback. We use your feedback to help us to understand what we've done well, resolve things that have gone wrong, and improve our standards and quality of service. We want to make it as easy as possible for you to let us know your views, including telling us what works well, and making a complaint if you are dissatisfied.

In this document you can find out:

- How to leave a comment
- How to give a compliment
- How to make a complaint, how we deal with complaints, and your right of appeal
- The principles we use to make sure that we handle complaints efficiently, and resolve them as quickly as possible, in a fair and honest way

Who is a customer?

A customer of the Council is anyone who accesses, uses or receives any Council service, or is affected by any Council policy or action.

What is feedback?

Feedback is an expression of opinion about the Council's actions or standard and quality of service. You may have an idea for improving our services. If you do, we would like to hear about it. Whilst we do try to consider all feedback received in our policy and decision-making, some changes can take time to be implemented, and in some instances the Council has no power or duty to provide the service. As such, we do not provide individual responses to the feedback we receive.

Please send your feedback to: **feedback@ryedale.gov.uk**

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.

Please send details of your complaint to: **complaints@ryedale.gov.uk**

What is a compliment?

If you think there is something we have done well, we would be happy to hear from you. You may want to praise an individual officer or team for a job well done or a service provided. We will pass on your compliments to the relevant service area, and encourage others to follow similar ways of working. To stay efficient and reduce back-office paperwork, we do not provide individual responses to compliments, but we are very grateful for the feedback we receive.

Please send your compliments to: **compliments@ryedale.gov.uk**

How we handle complaints

To ensure we handle complaints effectively, we follow the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's "Principle of good administration practice".

Getting it right

We will follow the law and take the rights of those concerned into account whilst following the Ryedale District Council Complaints Procedure. We will provide effective services, using appropriately trained and competent staff. This will allow us to take reasonable, timely decisions, based on all relevant considerations.

Being service-user focused

We will ensure our services can be accessed easily by everyone, including those needing reasonable adjustments. We will tell service-users what they can expect and what the organisation expects from them. We will deal with service-users helpfully, promptly and sensitively, taking account of people's individual circumstances.

Being open and accountable

We will be open and clear, ensuring information and advice is accurate and complete. We will state the criteria for any decisions we make and give the reasons for our decisions. We will take responsibility for our actions.

Acting fairly and proportionately

We will treat people with respect and courtesy. We will be impartial, and will not unlawfully discriminate against people or show prejudice. Our decisions and actions will be proportionate, appropriate and fair.

Putting things right

We will acknowledge our mistakes and apologize when appropriate, putting mistakes right quickly and effectively. We will provide clear and timely information about how and when to appeal or complain. We will operate an effective complaints procedure, which includes offering a fair and appropriate remedy when a complaint is upheld.

Seeking continuous improvement

We will review our procedures regularly and ensure they are effective. We will ask for feedback and use this to improve our service performance. We will ensure our organisation learns lessons from complaints and uses them to improve services and performance.

You can complain about...

- Delay in responding to your enquiries and requests
- Failure to provide a service
- Inadequate standard of service
- The treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- Dissatisfaction with local authority policy
- Our failure to follow proper procedures

Your complaint may involve more than one Council service or be about someone working on our behalf.

You can't complain about...

- A routine first-time request for a service
- A request for compensation from the Council
- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal
- Disagreement with a decision where a statutory right of appeal exists. for example in relation to: Council Tax, Planning or receiving a penalty charge notice
- An attempt to re-open a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- If you feel it is necessary to complain about the conduct of a Councillor there is a separate process for this which is dealt with under the Member's Code of Conduct. Please email feedback@ryedale.gov.uk or write to the Monitoring Officer, Ryedale House, Old Malton Road, Malton, YO17 7HH
- Feedback about policy. Although we do our best to ensure our policies are robust and fair, you may want to contact feedback@ryedale.gov.uk about them or suggest an amendment. This should be done outside the complaints procedure.

Where a complaint cannot be dealt with under the Council's complaints procedures, we will inform you of any alternative procedure.



Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. A representative will be required for young people under 12 years of age.

If you need support in making your complaint, please contact us by phone on 01653 600666. You can also email complaints@ryedale.gov.uk or visit us face-to-face at Ryedale House, Old Malton Road, Malton, YO17 7HH and one of our Customer Service Assistants will complete the online complaints form on your behalf.

Alternatively, the Citizens Advice Bureau offers an impartial service and can advise you if you need any help with making a complaint against us.

To find out more, please contact:

- Citizens Advice Bureau Tel: 0808 278 7900 or <https://citizensadvicehrs.org.uk/get-advice-contact/ryedale>
- Age Concern Tel: 01723 379058
- Carers Resource Tel: 01723 850155

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six 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.

How can I complain?

You can submit complaints, compliments and feedback in any of the following ways:

- In writing: by writing to Ryedale District Council, Ryedale House, Old Malton Road, Malton, YO17 7HH. Someone can also write on your behalf.
- In person: visit us at Ryedale House and speak to a member of staff between Monday to Thursday (9am to 5pm) and on Fridays (9am to 4:30pm)
- By telephone: phone 01653 600666 to contact Customer Services
- By email: complaints@ryedale.gov.uk
- Online: visit the Ryedale District Council website and fill in our Complaints, Compliments and Feedback online form

When submitting your complaint, compliment or feedback, tell us:

- Your full name and address, postcode, telephone number and email address
- As much as you can about the incident, service or employee involved
- What has gone right or what has gone wrong
- How you want us to resolve the matter

What happens after I have complained?

Wherever possible we aim to resolve complaints at the point of service delivery and as quickly as possible. We encourage you in the first instance to contact the service you wish to complain about. The service will do all it can to put things right and resolve the issue informally.

If however you are still dissatisfied and want to continue to make a complaint, we endeavour to acknowledge all complaints within one working day. We will then investigate your complaint in line with the following stages and timescales set out in this document.

Stage one



We will acknowledge your submission of your stage one complaint within one working day.

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This may mean an on-the-spot apology where appropriate, or explaining the circumstances of why something went wrong and immediate action taken to resolve the problem(s).

We hope to have frontline resolution within ten working days. However, if the issue is complex and we cannot resolve within the ten working days, we will contact you or your representative to explain the reason for an extension.

Our acknowledgement will include:

- Details of a point of contact should you wish to discuss your complaint
- A deadline for when a decision will be made. This will usually be within 10 working days of the date of receipt of your complaint, unless there are special circumstances.
- When the inquiry into your complaint has been completed you will be contacted again and provided with the following:
 - » A clear statement about whether or not your complaint has been upheld
 - » An explanation of the circumstances leading to the decision
 - » An explanation of the action which has been taken/is being taken to ensure the same thing does not happen again
 - » The offer of a remedy
 - » Details about how to make a stage two complaint if you disagree with the response

Stage two



If you are not satisfied with the response you receive about your complaint at stage one, then you can request a “stage two” investigation. To do this, you should respond to our decision either by email or letter, clearly stating that you wish to do this. We will acknowledge the submission of your stage two complaint within one working day.

Stage two deals with two types of complaint:

- Those that have not been resolved at stage one
- Those that are complex and require detailed investigation

Stage two complaints will be investigated by a senior manager. They may contact you to discuss your complaint, and to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for. After this investigation, we will 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.

When the investigating manager has completed their investigation, they will contact you and provide:

- A clear statement about whether or not your complaint has been upheld
- An explanation of why the issue has occurred
- An explanation of what is/will be done to make sure the same thing does not happen again
- The offer of a remedy
- Details about how to make stage three complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman if you disagree with the response

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you have been through all stages of our complaints procedure and you are still unhappy, you can ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to review your complaint.

There is no further level of appeal within the Council.

The Ombudsman cannot normally look at a complaint that has not completed the Ryedale District Council complaints procedure, so please make sure it has done so before contacting them.

The Ombudsman investigates complaints in a fair and independent way. It does not take sides. It is a free service.

The Ombudsman expects you to have given us a chance to deal with your complaint before you contact them. If you have not heard from us within a reasonable time, they may decide to look into your complaint anyway. This is usually up to 12 weeks, but can be longer for social care complaints that follow a statutory process.

About the Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman looks at individual complaints about Councils and some other organisations providing local public services.

It also investigates complaints about all adult social care providers (including care homes and care home agencies) for people who self-fund their care.

The contact details for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are:

Local Government and Social Care
Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Telephone Number: **0300 061 0614**

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm (except public holidays)

Persistent complainants

Whilst the Council endeavours to respond with patience and sympathy to the needs of all complainants, there are times when there is nothing further which can reasonably be done to assist or rectify a real or perceived problem.

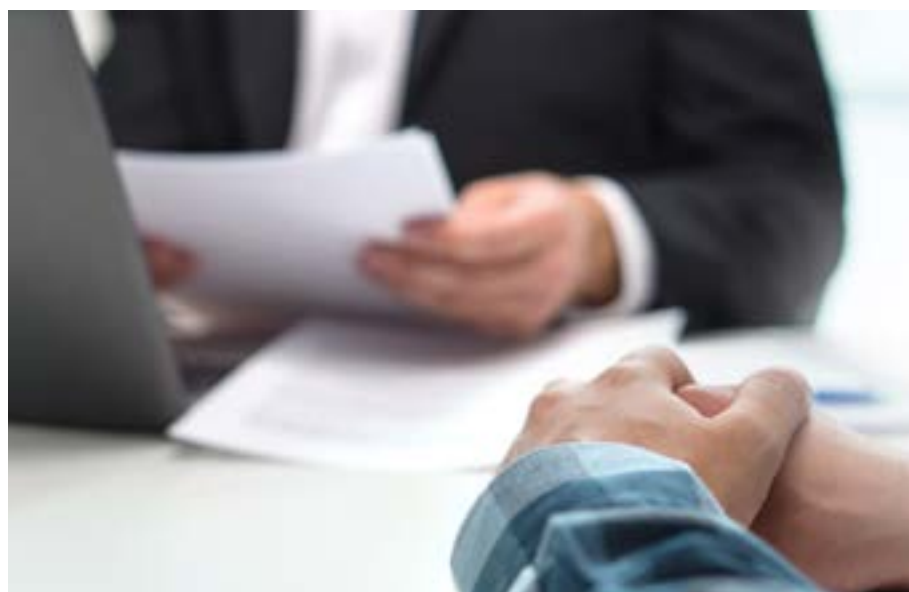
A minority of the complaints made to the Council may become persistent, vexatious or deliberately repetitive.

Whilst the vast majority of complainants do not fall into this category, there will be a small number of complainants who - despite having their complaint investigated - will not accept the matter is concluded.

In such cases the complainant(s) may be considered under the Habitual or Vexatious Complainants Policy.

The Council Solicitor will notify complainants in writing about the reasons why their complaint(s) has been treated as habitual or vexatious and the action that will be taken.

This does not preclude the complainant raising new issues that are significantly different from the original complaint, and these will receive a response in accordance with this procedure.



How we manage your information or personal data

Ryedale District Council may need to store and use data about you to deliver services properly.

However, you have the right to ask for:

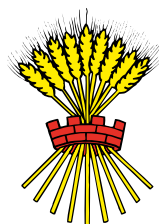
- Incomplete or inaccurate data to be rectified
- Personal data to be deleted
- The processing of your personal data to be restricted

These requests are not considered complaints, and requests should be made in writing or email to **subjectaccess@ryedale.gov.uk**

If you believe that we are not using and/or storing your data in a proper manner, or have not met our own standards for data use or storage and you have been through the relevant appeals procedure, then you can ask the Information Commissioner's Office to review this and offer you further advice.

Details on how to contact the Information Commissioner are available at: www.ico.org.uk

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