



**MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL**

Manchester City Council

Customer Complaints Policy

Updated 21 January 2026

About this policy

This policy will explain your rights if you want to complain to the Council and sets out what you can expect from us. It will also explain what you can do to help the Council investigate your complaint and what to do if you are not happy with our response.

The Complaints Team is responsible for updating this document and managing the complaints process to make sure we are doing what we have said we will do, in line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman's) Complaint Handling Code.

Section 1: What is a complaint and how can I complain?

1.1 What is a complaint?

A complaint is when someone tells the Council they're unhappy with a service or with Council staff. You should try to resolve things via 'service request' first (3.1.)

1.2 Is there anything the Council can't deal with as a complaint?

There are some things we can't help with. We won't list them all here, but they are usually things which are covered by another process.

Some examples include:

- parking or bus lane appeals,
- complaints about private landlords or schools,
- or complaints about Councillors themselves.

You should also complain within 12 months of being aware of the issue.

When you tell us what your complaint is, the Complaints Team will decide if we can investigate it. If we cannot, we will:

- let you know as soon as possible,
- tell you why we can't deal with it
- try to help you get your complaint to someone that can help.

1.3 How can I complain?

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to complain in your own words. The easiest and quickest way to complain is on our website at www.manchester.gov.uk/complaints You can also complain by:

Email: complaints.feedback@manchester.gov.uk

Phone: 0161 236 3012

Post: Complaints Team, PO Box 532, Manchester, M60 2LA

1.4 I need help to complain

You can ask for help as a 'reasonable adjustment.' We would consider your request and either agree to it or tell you why we can't and try to provide an alternative. You may also want help from a representative.

Section 2: Who can complain? Can I complain for someone else?

2.1 Who can complain?

Just about anyone can complain, but if you are raising a complaint on behalf of someone else or an organisation these are considered ‘third party complaints.’ We may need you to show you have consent (see 2.3) to act on the person’s behalf.

2.2 Complaining on behalf of a third party

We can respond to complaints raised on behalf of someone else, or something else like a business. When we do, we consider the complainant to be the party the complaint is raised on behalf of, not the person contacting us.

This is usually when a constituent complains to an Elected Member.

Please note: if you send a complaint to a Senior Council Officer, a Council Member, or to your MP, this will then be sent to our Feedback and Complaints Service.

There may also be limits to the information we can share to protect personal information of the subject.

2.3 Using Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

You may want to submit your complaint using the assistance of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). However, we would warn that AI-generated content can be irrelevant, misleading, or even false. We gain the best understanding of your complaint when it is raised clearly and succinctly in your own words.

You are responsible for ensuring that any AI-generated content submitted is relevant, accurate and as short as possible.

Where we feel that your use of AI is negatively impacting on our understanding of your complaint, we reserve the right to decide which information you have submitted is included for investigation.

2.4 Consent

When you make a complaint on behalf of someone, we may need to ask you to complete a consent form.

Section 3: Who will respond to my complaint?

3.1 Complaints investigators

You have the right for your complaint to be investigated by the people best placed to do so. The first time you complain, a senior staff member will look into it for you. It will be someone with a deep understanding of the service you are complaining about, and the standards the service should provide.

The Complaints Team will decide who the best person is to investigate your complaint.

3.2 Complaints Team

The Complaints Team manage the complaints process to make sure we are doing what we have said we will do when you make a complaint. You have the right for your complaint to be considered carefully and passed to the best person to help within 5 working days, though we will try to do this as soon as possible. Sometimes, the Complaints Team might respond directly to your complaint – we will explain why later (4.2).

3.3 The Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is independent of the Council. They look into complaints about councils and other organisations in a fair and transparent way.

After completing your complaint journey with us, you will have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review your complaint. However, they may only do so if you have been significantly affected by what has happened and if your complaint is closed with us.

They decide what they will and won't investigate, but they will provide you reasons to explain their decision. This is the final stage of your complaint journey.

If the Ombudsman is investigating a complaint (or has already investigated it), then we cannot normally respond further to it.

Section 4: Our complaints process and standards

4.1 Our standards

We aim to provide a high-quality service to the people of Manchester and beyond. When dealing with complaints you can expect us to:

- Deal with you honestly, fairly and politely.
- Take your complaint seriously and listen to you.
- Provide updates about what is happening with your complaint.
- Take action to improve if something has gone wrong.
- Respond within our agreed timescales (*set out below*).
- Use plain English and provide clear explanation.
- If something has gone wrong, try to put you back where you were as if things had not gone wrong to begin with. We will consider what is proportionate and use the Ombudsman's Guidance on Remedies to help us decide.

We want to resolve complaints as quickly as possible in the easiest way for you. Where this isn't possible, we will give you detailed reasoning why.

4.2 Our complaints process

Service Request: a request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsider a decision

Before you raise a complaint, you should raise a service request with us. If there is a issue that you want us to fix, this is usually the quickest way to arrange this.

Sometimes, we will simply go ahead and fix the issue so you may not receive a response from us about it.

However, if we can't do what you have asked us to do, you should be told why. Visit manchester.gov.uk to read about all the services we provide and how to raise service requests.

Complaint: A complaint is when someone tells the Council they're unhappy with a service or with Council staff.

Stage One Complaint: You have the right to complain if you have already reported an issue to us and something has gone wrong

The first time you contact us with a complaint about something is called a 'Stage One' complaint; we try as much as possible to resolve your complaint at this stage.

This also applies if a Councillor or Member of Parliament complains on your behalf.

You have the right for your complaint to be looked at by the person at the Council best to respond.

Usually, this means that senior staff in the relevant council team will investigate your complaint. Our Complaints Team will make sure your complaint is sent to the right team.

We will aim to:

- acknowledge your complaint in 5 working days (not including weekends and Bank Holidays), and after that;
- respond to you within 10 working days (not including weekends and Bank Holidays).

If we cannot meet those deadlines

- If we cannot do this, we will write to you explaining why, providing a new deadline. The new deadline should not be more than an additional ten working days.
- If we tell you about an extension to these timescales, we should provide you with the details of the Ombudsman.

Stage Two Complaint: If you are not satisfied with the Stage One response, you have the right to request that your complaint is progressed to Stage Two.

At this stage, if a **political representative** complains on your behalf, we will respond directly to you so you retain your right to contact the Ombudsman, but we will keep them involved.

The Complaints Team will look at your request and decide:

- whether a further investigation might help;
- who should consider your complaint (this will be someone neutral, such as a member of the Complaints Team).

We will aim to:

- acknowledge your complaint in 5 working days (not including weekends and Bank Holidays);
- respond in 20 working days (not including weekends and Bank Holidays) after acknowledging.

If we cannot meet those deadlines

- If we cannot do this, we will write to you explaining why, providing a new deadline. The new deadline should not be more than an additional 20 working days.
- If we tell you about an extension to these timescales, we should provide you with the details of the Ombudsman.

The Complaints Team will decide what stage your complaint is at, in line with this policy.

The Ombudsman: At every stage, we will also tell you about your right to contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

If we need longer to look into your complaint, we will explain why and we will aim to keep you updated.

If you raise additional issues during our investigation at either stage, we will try to look into these for you.

However, because we would need additional time, we would re-acknowledge your complaint with these new details and provide a new deadline for the response, based on the timescales above.

If we find ‘fault’ in our actions

We will tell you what we have done to put things right and what we will do in the future to improve our services, where relevant.

If you are not satisfied with our response

Although we would hope that you were satisfied with our response at Stage Two, sometimes this doesn’t happen.

Stage Two is the final stage of the complaints process, and we will not usually respond further after this point. After this, you have right to ask the Ombudsman to review your complaint.

4.3 Exceptions

We always aim to provide a two-stage complaints process. However, there are times when the Complaints Team might decide this is not appropriate.

Whenever this happens, we will explain why.

This might be because:

- You would benefit from an early review from the independent Complaints Team.
- You already had lots of contact with a service, so it would not help to hear from them again.
- You have raised different matters as part of your stage two complaint which we need to look into.

Social Care Complaints

There is a separate process for complaints about adult or children's social care.

This is because we handle these complaints under a 'statutory' process, meaning we are required by law to do things in a certain way.

If someone is receiving a service from social care, they can ask to access an advocacy service which is independent of the Council.

If you would like to access an advocacy service, please contact us to let us know.

Adult Social Care complaints

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 cover complaints about statutory social care services for adults.

This sets out the process for investigating social care complaints. This is a one stage process. We will respond within 25 days.

Sometimes, external investigators or mediators may be used if needed. However, we may send you a follow up response if we need to check anything else with you, or to see if you want us look at your complaint again.

Children's Social Care complaints

Children's Services statutory complaint procedures (social care) have three stages. They are set out under the Children's Act 1989: Representations Procedure (England) regulations 2006.

We should work within the following timeframes:

- Stage One complaints must be responded to within 10 working days, unless a 10 day extension is required in a complex case.
- Stage Two complaints must be responded to within 25 working days, but can take up to 60 days in complex cases.
- Stage Three (Independent Review Panel) is co-ordinated by the Complaints Team. If you have complained, you are invited to this face-to-face meeting, either in person or video link. This takes place with a group of independent people who will review how the complaint has been responded to at the earlier stages.

There are some exceptions to this social care process, such as complaints about Children's Residential homes, which are a regulated service monitored by Ofsted. They have their own procedures for managing complaints set out by the Care Standards Act 2000 for Stage One complaints. Stage Two complaints are referred to the Council for investigating under statutory procedures.

Section 5: Putting things right

Where something has gone wrong, we should acknowledge this and set out the actions we have taken or will take to put things right. Our remedy should reflect the impact on you because of any fault we find. This can include:

- Saying sorry;
- Recognising where things have gone wrong;
- Explaining why something happened or giving help with something;
- Acting if there has been delay;
- Changing a decision;
- Amending a record or adding a correction or more information.
- Changing our policies, procedures or what we do;
- Providing a payment (known as a 'financial remedy')

Payments

We don't usually offer payment when someone complains. The decision to offer a payment is taken very seriously because it reduces the amount we have available to spend on public services.

In every case, we consider the Ombudsman's Guidance on remedies.

Section 6: What we expect from you

We accept that you might be frustrated or angry when you contact us. However, we ask you to be respectful when raising your complaint.

We do **not** accept abuse or harassment.

When you share your complaint with us, please:

- Share it clearly and concisely, then give us time to look into it.
- Do not contact us repeatedly about the same issue.

If we fail to meet the timescales we have set out to you, you can contact us to let us know. Then, we will provide an update.

If you contact us again and again, it will slow down our response to you. If your contact negatively affects our ability to respond to complaints, we may consider this 'unreasonably persistent' in line with the Ombudsman's guidance, which says:

"Those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with an authority, hinder the authority's consideration of their, or other people's, complaints"

Sometimes, people might find it difficult to put their points across concisely. We will take this into account if we think you are being unreasonably persistent. We will always uphold our core standards and consider the Equality Act 2010 when doing so. (see 4.1)

However, we reserve the right to limit your contact with our team so we can look into complaints in line with our standards. If this happens:

- there is no right of review to us, although you can ask the Ombudsman to consider our decision. We will first write to you with a warning and our reasons. If the behaviour continues, we will send a second letter with our decision.

In all cases we will:

- say why and provide a timescale for any restrictions given.
- review our decision at the end of this.