



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol  
**MERTHYR TUDFUL**  
**MERTHYR TYDFIL**  
County Borough Council

# Corporate Complaints, Representations and Compliments Policy

Version 1.0  
September 2014

*Copies of this policy can be made available in alternative language/format upon request.*

## **Introduction**

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about the services we provide. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. 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 have got something wrong, we will apologise and correct our error where appropriate. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

## **When to use this policy**

When you express your complaint to us, we will usually respond in the way we will explain. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal so, rather than investigate your complaint; we will explain to you how you can appeal. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.

This Policy does not apply if the matter relates to a Freedom of Information or Data Protection issue.

## **Have you asked us yet?**

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time, then this policy does not apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe in this document.

## **Informal resolution**

If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you are dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff cannot help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

## **How to express concern or complaint formally**

You can express your concern/complaint in a number of ways:-

- You can ask for a copy of our complaint form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern/complaint formally.
- You can contact the complaints office on telephone: 01685 725000.

- You can use the form on our website at [www.merthyr.gov.uk](http://www.merthyr.gov.uk)
- You can contact us by email [mtcbccomplaints@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:mtcbccomplaints@merthyr.gov.uk)
- You can write a letter to us at the following address: Complaint Office, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8AN.

### **Dealing with your concern**

- We will formally acknowledge your concern 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 particular special requirements – for example, if you have a disability.
- We will deal with your concern 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 expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within six months. This is because it is better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this.

However, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring the complaint to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information to allow us to consider it properly.

**If you are expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf at the start of the complaint.**

### **What if there is more than one body involved?**

Even though the Council may contract out the provision of services to private/voluntary organisations, this does not absolve us of our responsibilities for those functions. If your complaint covers more than one organisation, we will usually work with the other organisation to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns.

### **Investigation**

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we will usually ask somebody from the service to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere in the Authority, or in certain cases we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that this is correct. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for. The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your

complaint. **If you do not want this to happen, it is important that you tell us at the start of the complaints process.**

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. For example, if 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 concerns as quickly as possible and will endeavour to deal with your complaint 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, and
- 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 concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on 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 you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we may also suggest mediation to try to resolve disputes.

We will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

## **Outcome**

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. We will show how the mistake affected you.

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 got it wrong, we will always apologise.

## **Putting things right**

If we did not provide a service you should have had, we will aim to provide it now if that is possible. If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

## **Ombudsman**

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into 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 body providing it,
- have been disadvantaged personally by maladministration or service failure.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right.

The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales contact details are:-

Email: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

Website: [www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

Address: 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

Telephone: 0300 790 0203

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Board about services in Welsh. We can advise you about such organisations.

## **Learning lessons**

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we made.

## **What if I need help**

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.

You can also use this concerns and complaints policy if you are someone under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline (telephone: 080880 23456, [www.meiccymru.org](http://www.meiccymru.org)) or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Oystermouth House, Phoenix Way, Llansamlet, Swansea SA7 9FS (telephone: 01792 765600, [post@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:post@childcomwales.org.uk) , [www.childcom.org.uk](http://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 concern or complaint. 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 where we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.