

Our Commitment to You

Confidentiality

West Lothian Council sometimes has to collect information about people so we can provide social work services to those who need them. When using information about you we will respect your confidentiality and your legal rights under the Data Protection Act. If you want to know more about your rights, please ask at your local social work office. The record of your complaint will be kept separately from your personal records.

Welfare rights advice

You can be provided with welfare rights advice to promote full uptake of benefit.

Equality

We are committed to ensuring that:

- our services are equally open to all
- we will not accept discrimination or harassment on any grounds by either our staff or people using our services
- we gather statistics about our services to ensure standards are being met and to plan for future service provision; you may be asked to provide information to assist us in this
- we publish reports regularly on our performance in meeting these standards.

Involvement

- We will make sure that we clearly understand your complaint.
- We will involve you in any formal investigation of your complaint.
- We will give you a clear deadline for responding to your complaint and ask for your consent for any extension of that deadline.

Discrimination

Making a complaint will not lead to discrimination against you. If you think that staff are acting unfairly towards you because you have complained, or are not dealing properly with your complaint, then you should report this to:

**Social Policy, West Lothian Civic Centre,
Howden South Road, Livingston, EH54 6FF.
Tel. 01506 280000**

Social Work Offices Contact Details

Social Work Head Office,
West Lothian Civic Centre,
Howden South Road,
Livingston EH54 6FF

Tel. 01506 280000

Bathgate Social Work Centre

69 Whitburn Road,
Bathgate EH48 1HE

Tel. 01506 284700

Broxburn Social Work Centre

Strathbrock Partnership Centre,
189a West Main Street,
Broxburn EH52 5LH.

Tel. 01506 775666

Livingston Social Work Centre

Arrochar House, Almondvale
Boulevard, Livingston,
West Lothian EH54 6QN

Tel: 01506 282252

Information is available in braille, tape, large print and community languages. Contact the interpretation and translation service on **01506 280000.**

Handling Complaints



West Lothian Council Social Work Services

westlothian.gov.uk



West Lothian
Council

Complaints

We define a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction with the services provided by, or on behalf of, West Lothian Council Social Policy Services. We will always consider any complaint.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone who receives, requests, or is affected by our social services can make a complaint. This is not restricted to 'service users' and their relatives or representatives, but may include people who come into contact with or are affected by these services.

We will always try to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible. We will initially respond within 5 working days. If you are unhappy with this response you can request a review which will be completed within 20 working days of your request.

When requesting a formal response you are entitled to the following:

- an acknowledgement within 3 working days.
- a full written response within 20 working days (unless you agree to give us more time)

If you remain dissatisfied with the final response regarding your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at your complaint.

Sometimes, the guidance allows us to deal with your complaint in a different way. This might be because you do not have a legal right to make that kind of complaint, or it might be that your complaint results in other procedures being followed (for example a child protection investigation). If this happens, we will tell you:

- what the reason for this is
- how your complaint will be handled
- how you can take the matter further if you are unhappy with these arrangements.

How to complain

You can complain in any of these ways:

- 1** Speak to a member of staff, they will try to sort the matter out or help you take the matter further
- 2** Telephone the Customer Service Centre on Freephone 0800 3285143 or 01506 280000 or your local social work office
- 3** Email us at customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk stating it is for the attention of the Designated Complaints Officer
- 4** Write a letter to the Designated Complaints Officer of your local social work office - addresses and telephone numbers are given at the end of this leaflet
- 5** Have someone complain on your behalf in any of the ways listed above.

If someone complains on your behalf, we may ask for a written note from you telling us that they are acting on your behalf and giving permission for them to be given confidential information. No matter how you complain it will be dealt with in the same way. You do not have to complain in writing to ensure a proper reply. Some clients prefer to make a written complaint so they can keep a copy.

How will we respond?

We will ask you to clarify the focus of your complaint (the main concerns you want us to look into) and the required redress (what you want us to do in response to your complaint). This is to make sure we know what we have to look at and that all your concerns are considered.

We will usually offer to sort out the complaint informally by looking into the matter, discussing it with you and doing what we feel we can to resolve the problem. A frontline approach can often be a better, quicker, way of getting things sorted out. It does not mean that the complaint is taken less seriously. If this does not get you the result you want, you will be able to resubmit your complaint for a more formal response.

If you prefer (or if we cannot sort out the matter informally) we will resolve the complaint formally. Formal responses involve:

- sending you a written acknowledgement of the complaint
- appointing a senior officer to fully investigate the complaint
- sending you a written response to all the issues raised
- letting you know how to take matters further if you are unhappy with the formal response.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about public services in Scotland. This includes complaints about local council and the NHS in Scotland. If you remain dissatisfied with this final response regarding your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint. The SPSO cannot normally look at complaints:

Where you have not gone all the way through the council's complaints handling procedure.

More than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about,

or

That have been or are being considered in court.

The SPSO's contact details are:

SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

Their freepost address is:

FREEPOST SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330
Online Contact: www.spsos.org.uk/contact-us
Website: www.spsos.org.uk