

Your voice

Your opportunity to give feedback on council services and schools

At Denbighshire County Council, we aim to provide an excellent standard of service at all times. We are committed to providing high-quality services in the most effective and efficient way possible.

We really want to hear from you

Suggestions

If you have any suggestions on how we can improve things, please contact us. Your opinion is important and we welcome your ideas as it gives us an opportunity to take a fresh look at the services we provide. Your suggestions can help us to change things and make the future better. We will respond to all suggestions and will tell you if we take action as a result.

Compliments

If you feel we have done something well, we would also like to hear from you. Compliments about the quality of services we have provided are important and help us try to make sure that the standard of service you have received can be provided to others. We use the feedback we receive to improve our services and how we provide them. We will not usually respond to compliments unless you ask us to.

Complaints or comments

We work hard to deliver our services right first time, but we understand that there may be times when things go wrong and you may not be happy with the service we provide. If this happens, or you feel that our services are generally not up to scratch, please let us know. We recognise the importance of complaints and welcome them as a valuable way of helping us improve. If you want to make a complaint, we will do all we can to investigate it as fairly and as quickly as possible.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is a way of telling us that you are not happy about the standard of a service we provide or something we have done (or not done) that affects either you or a group of people. Services provided by contractors on our behalf are also included. You are entitled to make a complaint when:

- you think the work we've done isn't up to standard;
- we haven't carried out work you've asked us to within the timescale given and we haven't given you a reasonable explanation;
- we haven't followed our rules, policies or procedures;
- we have provided inaccurate or misleading information;
- there has been an unnecessary delay in taking action; or
- one of our employees is rude or unhelpful.

A complaint is not:

- reporting a fault (such as a street light not working);
- a first request for a service (such as repairs to a council house);
- a first request for information or an explanation (such as who decides the council tax rates);

- telling us you disagree with a council policy (although you may complain about how we use the policy); or
- a way of appealing (for example, if we have refused to give you planning permission, you have a parking fine, or we have made a decision about Housing Benefit or council tax).

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone who is affected by our services can make a complaint, including:

- residents;
- local businesses;
- visitors to the county;
- community groups;
- suppliers of services; and
- anyone else, including children or young people, who uses or is affected by our services.

People acting on your behalf such as councillors, MPs or representatives, can also make complaints. If a family member or friend complains on your behalf, we need your permission to go ahead with the complaint.

How to make a complaint

The following step-by-step guide explains how to make a complaint and how we will deal with it. We promise to:

- take all complaints seriously;
- treat all complaints fairly and confidentially;
- aim to respond to all complaints within the agreed timescale;
- apologise if we have made a mistake; and
- try to improve the way we do things in the future.

We know that making a complaint can sometimes be difficult. If you do make a complaint, we will not treat you negatively as a result. If you choose not to give us your name when you complain, we will still deal with your complaint in line with this policy. However, we will not be able to contact you with the outcome of your complaint.

Step 1

If you would like to make a complaint, please contact us to explain the problem and tell us what you want us to do. We will listen to you and try to sort out your complaint immediately. We can deal with most complaints in this way, but sometimes we need more time to investigate the matter. If this is the case, an officer from the department your complaint is about will:

- look at what has happened and try to put things right;
- talk to members of staff who have been involved; and
- explain what they have found and what we will do.

We aim to respond to step-1 complaints within 10 working days. If we cannot deal with your complaint in that time, we will explain why there is a delay and tell you when we expect to be able to sort out the matter.

Step 2

If you feel that we have not sorted out your complaint using step 1, please let us know. A senior officer or the head teacher (if your complaint is about a school matter) will:

- look at what has happened and try to put things right;
- talk to members of staff who have been involved; and
- write to you to explain what they have found and what we will do.

We aim to respond to step-2 complaints within 25 working days. If we cannot deal with your complaint in that time, we will explain why there is a delay and tell you when we expect to be able to sort out the matter.

Step 3

If you feel that we have not sorted out your complaint using step 2, please let us know. The Chief Executive of the council (or a senior member of staff acting on their behalf) will:

- review your complaint and the way we dealt with it; and
- write to you to explain what they have found out. This should be within 15 working days.

If your complaint is about a school or social services, there are different ways of dealing with it at step 3.

Complaints about schools

If you feel that your complaint has not been sorted out following step 2, you can ask for the matter to be considered at an appeal hearing. Here you are given the chance to explain why you do not agree with our response. The panel, which is made up of three school governors, will then make a decision and write to you with what they have found. This should be within 15 school days of the appeal hearing.

Complaints about social services

If you feel that we have not sorted out your complaint using step 2, you can ask for the matter be considered at an independent review panel. Here you have the chance to explain why you do not agree with our response. The panel, which is made up of three people who don't work for the council, will then make a decision and contact us. We will then write to you with our response. This should be within 15 working days of the review panel.

Step 3 is the last step of our complaints procedure. We try hard to deal with all complaints under our own complaints procedure. However, if you feel that we have not been able to deal with your complaint, you could contact the following.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The main role of the ombudsman is to investigate complaints from members of the public about the way they have been treated by a public organisation. Complaints will be investigated independently and fairly, and the ombudsman will say what the public

organisation should do to put the complaint right. You may contact the ombudsman at any time, but they will prefer you to have given us the opportunity to deal with your complaint first.

Contact details for the ombudsman are as follows.

Address: 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
CF35 5LJ
Phone: 01656 641 150
Fax: 01656 641199
E-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
Website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

The ombudsman cannot investigate complaints about school matters. However, if your complaint is about a school matter and you have taken all the steps above and are still not happy, you could contact the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning at:

Address: Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Phone: 0300 060 3300
Website: www.wales.gov.uk

How do I contact you?

Please contact us:

- in person at any of our offices, for example a one-stop shop, library or leisure centre
- by phone on 01824 70 60 75
- by text message on 07800 140088
- by writing to Your Voice, County Hall, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin, LL15 1YN
- online at www.denbighshire.gov.uk/yourvoice
- by e-mail your.voice@denbighshire.gov.uk
- by filling in a complaint form, which is available in all our offices and on our website or
- by speaking to your local councillor

You should make complaints about a school matter direct to the school concerned.

Will my complaint be confidential?

We will keep the information you provide safe and confidential and we will use it in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. The act regulates the way we can use personal information. We may need to discuss your complaint with members of council staff, but we will not discuss your complaint with, or give information to, another organisation without your written permission.

Is there a time limit for making a complaint?

It can be difficult to look into things that happened a long time ago. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will not consider a complaint about something that happened more than six months ago.

Are all complaints about the council dealt with in this way?

We will not deal with complaints about certain matters in line with this policy because sometimes there are more suitable methods.

We will refer:

- any complaint that raises concerns about the well-being of a child or adult to the relevant department for more investigation;
- complaints about a possible crime to the police, if appropriate;
- complaints against councillors to our county clerk;
- complaints against an entire school governing body to the local education authority (LEA).

Will someone help me to make my complaint?

If you would like help to make your complaint, please let us know. Our staff are fully trained to help you. If you would prefer help from someone who doesn't work for the council, you could contact Citizens Advice or any of the following organisations.

Commissioner for Older People in Wales

The commissioner represents older people and aims to protect and promote the opinions of people in Wales who are aged 60 and over. The commissioner can provide useful information and support for older people in Wales.

Contact details for the commissioner are as follows.

Address: Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Butetown
Cardiff
CF10 5FL
Phone: 08442 640 670
Fax: 08442 640 680
E-mail: ask@olderpeoplewales.com
Website: www.olderpeoplewales.com

Children's Commissioner for Wales

The commissioner's job is to help the children and young people of Wales. The commissioner can offer help, support, advice and guidance to any child or young person who may need it.

Details for the commissioner are as follows.

Address: Penrhos Manor
Oak Drive

Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 7YW

Phone: 01492 523 333
Fax: 01492 523 336
E-mail: post@childcomwales.org.uk
Website: www.childcom.org.uk

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)

The CSSIW supports and regulates services in Wales, including social services. You may contact the CSSIW for advice and information.

Contact details for the CSSIW are as follows.

Address: Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Phone: 01443 848 450
Fax: 029 2082 3417
E-mail: cssiw@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.cssiw.org.uk

The Welsh Language Board (WLB)

The WLB offers advice and information on services that are provided in Welsh.

Contact details for the WLB are as follows.

Address: Welsh Language Board
Yr Hen Argraffdy
St Helen's Street
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 2YD
Phone: 01286 684 700
Website: www.byig-wlb.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

If your complaint is about race, disability, sex, sexuality, age, religion, belief or human rights, you may get advice from the EHRC.

Contact details for the EHRC are as follows.

Address: EHRC
3rd floor
3 Callaghan Square

Cardiff
CF10 5BT

Phone: 02920 447710

Textphone: 02920 447713

Fax: 02920 447712

Website: wales@equalityhumanrights.com

Unacceptable actions by people making a complaint

Most people who complain act and behave in a responsible way. However, there may be times when their actions are inappropriate. We understand that complaints can make you feel frustrated, but we will not accept aggressive or abusive behaviour.

Who can I contact for more advice and information?

If you do not understand any of the information in this policy, or you would like to know more, please contact:

Your Voice
County Hall
Wynnstay Road
Ruthin
LL15 1YN

To get a copy of this policy in Braille, in large print or on audio tape, phone 0800 243 980.

If you would like any of our information in a language other than Welsh or English, please let us know.