



LANCASHIRE
COMBINED COUNTY
AUTHORITY

Complaints and Feedback Procedure

Document Control

Title	Complaints and Feedback Procedure
Document Type	Within the Constitution
Author	Angela Esslinger
Owner	Angela Esslinger
Created	March 2025
Review Date	As and when required

Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Description of Change
V1.1	13.10.2025	Angela Esslinger	Contact information updated

Policy Governance

Version	Governance Group	Date Approved
V1.0	LCCA Board	13.03.2025

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Scope.....	4
3. Is this the right procedure for my complaint?	4
4. Timescales and Delays	5
5. Outcomes	5
6. Accessibility.....	6
7. How to make a complaint	6
8. Who is involved.....	7
8.1 Stage 1 – Investigation by Senior Manager.....	7
8.2 Stage 2 – Consideration by Head of Service or Director.....	8
9. Putting things right.....	8
10. What if you are still unhappy with the response you receive	8
11. Continuous learning and development	9
12. Management of unreasonable complaints behaviour	9
13. Management of unreasonable complaints behaviour	9
LCCA Complaints Procedure: Formal Investigation.....	10

1. Introduction

Our officers are committed to providing the best possible service we can. If we fail to do this, we want to know about your specific problem and take steps to avoid mistakes from happening again so that we can improve our services.

We welcome feedback, as people are at the heart of our service delivery and good complaint handling is central to this. This procedure explains how you can take up matters formally through the LCCA Complaints Procedure (the Procedure) if you think the service you have received from the LCCA is unsatisfactory.

This Procedure operates in line with The Complaint Handling Code (the Code) published by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman). This Procedure sets out the process for responding to complaints effectively and fairly, as we wish to learn from when things have gone wrong.

2. Scope

We accept the definition by the Ombudsman, as set out in the Code:

“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.”

A complaint is different from a service request. A service request is defined as:

“a request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision”.

The complaints procedure is not intended to be used for service requests. We first need to have the opportunity to deal with such matters under our business-as-usual processes.

Therefore, first reports of any complaint are also dealt with under our business-as-usual processes as we cannot respond to a complaint unless we know about it first. We give ourselves a 10-working day timescale to resolve your complaint before the formal procedure applies.

This procedure deals with all complaints where there is not a separate specific or legal procedure to deal with the matter.

3. Is this the right procedure for my complaint?

The LCCA will consider complaints about any matters for which it is responsible.

We cannot deal with:

- Complaints about district council or county council responsibilities.
- A concern raised by a third party without explicit consent by the individual concerned.,
- Complaints about schools.
- Any matter on subject to legal action by or against the LCCA which also includes abandoned matters.
- Complaints from employees (or ex-employees) and their representatives in respect of matters relating to their employment or pension.
- Complaints by commissioned providers about matters relating to their legal contracts, for example payment issues.
- Complaints about data protection or other matters which fall within the remit of the Information Commissioner

We will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If we decide not to accept your complaint, we tell you the reason why and inform you of your right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. We will carefully consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.

Complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered where the Complaints Manager feels that this is appropriate, but action may be limited if there is insufficient information available to enable a full investigation to take place.

4. Timescales and Delays

We will accept complaints within 12 months of the issue occurring or of you becoming aware of the matter. We will consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.

5. Outcomes

The aims of the Complaints Procedure are:

- to prioritise a culture of learning from complaints to improve our services,
- to provide customer focussed services,
- to encourage constructive feedback,
- to deal with complaints fairly and consistently across services,

- to investigate complaints about service delivery promptly and, where we are at fault, to put things right,
- to encourage best practice by all staff; and
- to increase customer satisfaction across all our services.

6. Accessibility

We take our responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 seriously. We have therefore tried to make this procedure as accessible and straightforward as possible.

We will provide different channels through which people can make a complaint. We aim to anticipate the needs of individuals who may need extra support to access the complaints procedure. You may arrange a representative or advocate to support you with your complaint.

We aim to make reasonable adjustments if required. Please let us know if you need extra support to be heard. We will keep a record the reasonable adjustments that we have agreed and keep them under active review.

We consider high volumes of complaints as indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints procedure. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that individuals are unable to complain.

7. How to make a complaint

You can contact us about your concerns in many ways:

- by completing the webform on the LCCA website
- by email to: complaintsandfeedback@lancashire-cca.gov.uk
- by letter to:

LCCA Complaints

Complaints and Appeals Team

County Hall

Preston PR1 8XJ

Please ensure that any communication contains:

- Your full name,
- Your postal address,

- The date (where possible) and details of the complaint; and
- The service concerned where possible.

A template for reporting your complaint can be found at the end of this document.

Our investigations into your complaint will be thorough and unbiased, will be completed within strict timescales and your confidentiality will be respected as far as possible.

8. Who is involved

The Complaints and Appeals Manager is responsible for complaint handling performance and has the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly. The Complaints and Appeals Team will ensure that every complaint is logged, and progress is monitored. They have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. The appropriate Head of Service or Director for the service to which the complaint relates, will act as the LCCA Designated Complaints Officer for the complaint. The Deputy Leader of the LCCA is the member responsible for complaints.

The Complaints and Appeals Team will consider all expressions of dissatisfaction to decide on the appropriate action to take in each case.

8.1 Stage 1 – Investigation by Senior Manager

- The complaint will be formally acknowledged by the LCCA within 5 working days.
- It will be recorded on the LCCA's electronic complaints management system.
- The appropriate manager for the service / staff member to which the complaint relates, will investigate, and respond to your complaint within 10 working days of your complaint being acknowledged.

It is hoped that in this way your complaint can be resolved promptly with an explanation, apology or resolution being provided.

A complaint response will be provided when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions will be tracked and actioned promptly, and appropriate updates will be provided.

In exceptional circumstances, where the issues raised are more complex and will take more than 10 days to investigate, we will let you know why we need more time. Any extension will be no more than 10 working days without good reason. If we breach this timescale or do not let you know the reasons for any delay, you will be provided details of how to approach the Ombudsman.

We hope that the Stage 1 response will resolve your complaint to your complete

satisfaction. However, if you remain dissatisfied with your response, you may ask for your complaint to be escalated to Stage 2 in the process.

8.2 Stage 2 – Consideration by Head of Service or Director

The appropriate Head of Service or Director to which the complaint relates acts as the Designated

Complaints Officer for your complaint. They will not have previously been involved with your complaint and will examine the reasons for your continued dissatisfaction and carry out a full review and if necessary, further investigate your complaint. You will be sent a comprehensive reply within 20 working days of when you escalated your complaint to Stage 2.

Where our complaint response is handled by a third party, for example a contractor, this will form part of this two-stage procedure. You will not be expected to go through two complaints processes.

If we breach this timescale, or this Procedure you will be provided details of how to approach the Ombudsman.

9. Putting things right

This Procedure is not intended to be used to obtain compensation payments. We may however offer a payment if you are out of pocket as a result of an upheld complaint. If a complaint is upheld, we will also consider making a "time and trouble" payment, in line with the Ombudsman guidance on remedies (click for link).

10. What if you are still unhappy with the response you receive

We hope to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction. However, if you are still not happy after both stages of the procedure have been completed, you can ask the Ombudsman, to investigate your complaint. Details of how to do that will be included in your Stage 2 response. The Ombudsman's contact details are as follows:

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Online complaint form: <https://complaints.lgo.org.uk/>

The Ombudsman will expect you to have given us the opportunity to resolve your complaint through our own procedures before they will investigate.

11. Continuous learning and development

The LCCA uses complaints and customer feedback to improve the quality of our services and ensure that lessons are learnt. Complaints are therefore monitored and reported on quarterly and annually, so that best practice is disseminated throughout the LCCA.

Themes and learning from complaints are reported to the Monitoring Officer and Member Responsible for Complaints through the appropriate governance arrangements.

12. Management of unreasonable complaints behaviour

There are a small number of complainants who pursue their complaints in ways that are unreasonable and /or who take up an unwarranted amount of time and LCCA resources.

In such circumstances, we may apply our policy on the management of unreasonable or unacceptable behaviour, which has been drawn up in line with guidance issued by the Ombudsman.

Such action is very rare and not taken lightly and we will inform complainants before any restrictions are applied so that they might moderate their behaviour. Any such restrictions will be individual, proportionate and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. We will keep such restrictions under regular review.

13. Management of unreasonable complaints behaviour

The Complaints and Appeals Manager will determine any issue relating to the interpretation of any provision in this procedure.

LCCA Complaints Procedure: Formal Investigation

Name

Address

Daytime telephone number

E-mail address

Are you happy for us to correspond with you by e-mail? Yes/No

LCCA Service concerned

Reference on any previous correspondence

What do you think the LCCA did wrong?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

What do you think the LCCA should do to put things right?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date of Completion.....