

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Customer Services

Making a Complaint

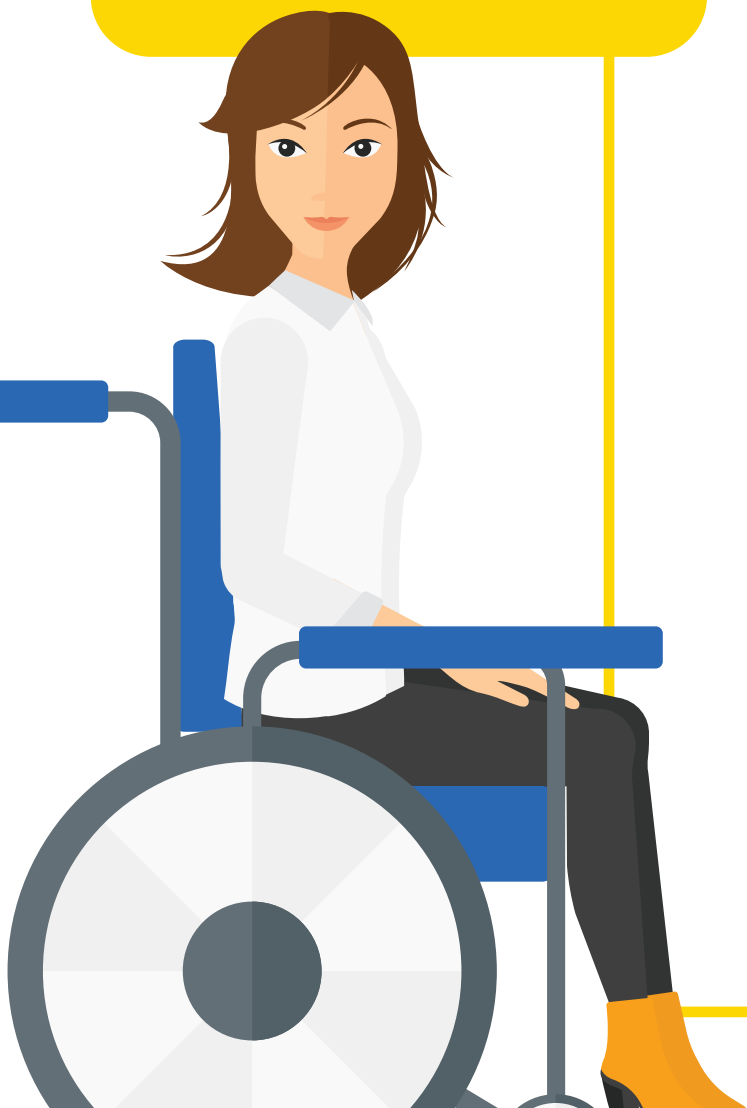


Customer
first.



Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is committed to always providing a high quality service which meets the needs of our customers. Through listening and learning, we seek to improve the quality of our service and encourage good practice by our staff.

However, we appreciate that customers may occasionally have cause to complain. In such instances we will investigate complaints quickly and effectively. If we have made a mistake we will apologise, put it right if possible, and take steps to prevent it happening again.



Complaints

What is a complaint?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction which requires a response. A complaint may be raised by anyone who considers they have been affected by the council's action or lack of action, or by the standard of a council service. This may be services delivered directly by the council, or another organisation delivering services on the council's behalf.

What is considered a complaint?

- Incorrect or poor delivery of a service.
- Failure of council staff to follow the correct policy or procedure.
- A member of council staff (or any of our contractors or agents) behaving inappropriately.
- Refusal of the council to provide a service which it should be providing.

What is NOT considered a complaint?

If for any reason we decide not to deal with a complaint under this policy, we will explain why in writing. The council's complaints policy sets out what will not be considered as a complaint. Some examples of what is not considered a complaint are:

- Initial requests for service or information – for example, the first report of a missed bin is a request for service.
- Matters of law or policy.
- Disagreements with a council decision where an appeals process is offered or a statutory right of appeal exists.
- Complaints about services provided by other organisations (in these circumstances, we will always try to help you identify the right organisation to make the complaint to).
- The issue of concern is already being addressed by legal proceedings.
- Vexatious complaints (*please refer to the Vexatious and Persistent Behaviour Policy*).

What is the time limit for making complaints?

It is easier for the council to find out what happened and to put things right if complaints are received at the time the issue happened. For these reasons, we will normally only accept complaints made within **six months** of the incident or circumstances that led to it.

How can I make a complaint?

Completing our online form is the quickest and easiest way to make a complaint or give us any other feedback. To complete an online form visit the council website at www.welhat.gov.uk

Alternatively you can contact us:

@ By email at customerservice@welhat.gov.uk

☎ By telephone on **01707 357000**

📍 By post, filling in the form at the end of this leaflet and sending it to us at

**Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Council Offices
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
AL8 6AE**

📍 In person at the above council offices address

What we will do when you make a complaint

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days and tell you who will be investigating your complaint.
- Deal with your complaint quickly and fairly.
- Provide a full written response within ten working days, or keep you informed if this is not possible.

What we also commit to

- Report on our performance of managing complaints.
- Use all the feedback we receive to improve services.

The Complaints Process

The complaints process is split into two key stages:

Stage 1 – Investigation

A new complaint will be recorded as a formal complaint at Stage 1 of the council's complaints procedure. The complaint will be investigated and responded to by an appropriate officer from the service concerned.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome or the way the complaint has been handled, you have the right to request a review under the final stage of the procedure. To escalate the complaint to the final stage you should notify the council within **two months** of the date of the first stage response letter, providing details of why you remain dissatisfied and what further remedy you are seeking.

Stage 2 – Review

The aim of the second stage of the process is to review the handling and outcome of the first stage of the complaint. Any complaint proceeding to the second stage will be reviewed by an officer/manager more senior to the person who investigated the first stage complaint, or at an equivalent level from a different service to the officer who investigated the complaint.

What if I am not happy with the outcome of my complaint?

If after going through both stages of the procedure you remain unhappy with the way your complaint has been handled by the council, you have the right to complain to the Ombudsman. See below for details of which Ombudsman will investigate your complaint:

The contact details of the relevant Ombudsman's service are sent out with all final stage response letters.

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

📍 **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman**
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

☎ Telephone: **0300 061 0614**

🌐 Local Government Ombudsman's website at
www.lgo.org.uk

Housing Ombudsman

If you are a council tenant or leaseholder with a housing specific complaint:

📍 **Housing Ombudsman Service**
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

✉ Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

🌐 Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

The Housing Ombudsman insists on a cooling off period of eight weeks after the final stage response before accepting a complaint.

Vexatious and Persistent Behaviour

We define unreasonably persistent and vexatious complaints as those that, because of the frequency or nature of a complainant's contact with our officers, hinder our consideration of their (or other people's) complaints.

We do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by complainants or any customer and will take firm action to protect them from this.

For more information of how we manage such complaints, or for examples of unreasonable or persistent behaviour, please refer to the council's Vexatious and Persistent Behaviour Policy.

Diversity Monitoring

To help us design services that meet our customers' needs you will be asked to complete some diversity questions when passing us a compliment, comment or complaint. Any information you give us will be used in the strictest confidence. The information supplied will only be used for statistical purposes and will not be passed to other organisations.

Privacy Statement

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is committed to protecting your privacy when you use our services. Our Privacy Notice (see www.welhat.gov.uk/privacy-notice) explains how we use information about you and how we protect your privacy.






Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Complaint Form

The easiest way to let us know what you think about our services is to complete an online form at www.welhat.gov.uk

Alternatively, please complete this form and send it to:

 **Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Council Offices
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
AL8 6AE**

Name:

Address:
..... Post Code:

Daytime phone number:

Mobile phone number (if different):

Email address:

How would you prefer us to get in contact with you about your complaint?:
.....

Details of your complaint:
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Have you complained about this before?: Yes No
If you have, please tell us when:
.....

What do you want us to do to resolve the issue?
.....
.....
.....

Please sign and date the form:

Signed

Date



Diversity Monitoring

Please answer the following questions to help us design services to meet our customers' diverse needs. If you prefer not to give this information, please leave this section blank or only fill in the information you are happy to provide.

Please tick the appropriate boxes:

Gender:

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Age range:

Under 18

18-24

25-44

45-60

Over 60

Prefer not to say

Ethnicity:

White UK

White Irish

White Other (please specify)

Bangladeshi

Indian

Pakistani

Asian Other (please specify)

Black African

Black Caribbean

Black Other (please specify)

Mixed – White & Black African

Mixed – White & Black Caribbean

Mixed – White & Asian

Mixed – Other (please specify)

Chinese

Other Ethnic Group (please specify)

Prefer not to say

Religion:

None

Christian

Buddhist

Jewish

Muslim

Sikh

Hindu

Other (please specify)

Prefer not to say

Useful contacts for independent advice

Citizens Advice

📞 Get help on the phone by phoning the Advice Line on **03444 111444**, where trained advisers will take your call any time between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays).

📍 You can also get face-to-face advice with the drop-in services at our local centre:

Citizens Advice Welwyn Hatfield
1st floor, Queensway House
Hatfield
AL10 0LW

🌐 www.welwynhatfieldcab.org.uk

How to contact us

@ Online at www.welhat.gov.uk

📞 By telephone on **01707 357000**

@ By email at customerservice@welhat.gov.uk

📍 By post, filling in the form at the end of this leaflet and sending it to us at:

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📍 In person at the above council offices address

Our office opening hours are:

8.45am – 5.15pm on Monday to Thursday

8.45am – 4.45pm on Friday

