

## 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:

**The Senior Manager Communities & Information**  
**Strathbrock Partnership Centre**  
**Broxburn**  
**West Lothian**

### Social Work Offices Contact Details

Social Work Head Office, Strathbrock Partnership Centre  
189a West Main Street, Broxburn, West Lothian, EH52 5LH

**Tel: 01506 775666**

### Bathgate Social Work Centre

69 Whitburn Road, Bathgate, West Lothian, EH48 1HE

**Tel: 01506 776700**

### Broxburn Social Work Centre

Strathbrock Partnership Centre Broxburn, West Lothian,  
EH52 5LH

**Tel: 01506 775666**

### Livingston Social Work Centre

Cheviot House, Owen Square, Livingston, West Lothian, EH54

**Tel: 01506 777777**

This information is available in Braille,  
on tape, in **large print** and in other  
languages. Please phone the Interpretation and  
Translation Service on **0131 242 8181** for a copy.

[westlothian.gov.uk](http://westlothian.gov.uk)

## Handling Complaints



West Lothian Council **Social Work Services**

**West Lothian Council** delivers

[westlothian.gov.uk](http://westlothian.gov.uk)



# 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.

## Your Rights

You have a legal right to complain if you are:

- a client of Social Work Services
- complaining on behalf of a client
- entitled to receive a service from us but not getting the service

We must deal with your complaint according to national government guidance.

You have the choice of an informal response or a formal response to your complaint.

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

- an acknowledgement within five days
- a full written response within 28 days (unless you agree to give us more time)

If you are unhappy with the response, you can request that your complaint is referred to the Complaints Review Sub-Committee of the Council for a full hearing within 56 days of referral.

In addition to these rights, we will usually offer to have a senior officer review your complaint, to see if we can do anything else, before it is referred to the Complaints Review Sub-Committee.

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 complain, 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 Use the Council's "Points of View" freepost comments and complaints form
- 2 Write a letter to the Designated Complaints Officer or to the manager of your local social work office, addresses and telephone numbers are given at the end of this leaflet
- 3 Speak to a member of staff, they will try to sort the matter out or help you take the complaint further
- 4 Telephone the Customer Service Centre on Freephone **0800 3285143** or the Call Centre on **01506 775000** or your local social work office
- 5 e-mail us at: [customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk) stating that the e-mail is for the attention of the Designated Complaints Officer
- 6 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. 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?

- 1 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).
- 2 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. An informal 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.
- 3 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 Complaints Review Sub-Committee

If once you have received a formal letter in response to your complaint you are still unhappy you can ask to be referred to the Complaints Review Sub-Committee. You must ask for this in writing within 28 days of the date on the letter. You should write to:

**Head of Support Services**  
**West Lothian Council**  
**West Lothian House**  
**West Lothian EH54 6QP**

The sub-committee consists of three people who are independent of Social Policy. They are not employees or elected members of the Council nor are they married to employees or elected members. The purpose of the sub-committee is to examine the circumstances in which the complaint was submitted, the issues raised and the way it was dealt with.

As well as providing a written statement and any supporting papers, you and a Social Policy representative are each given a chance to speak. A friend, relative, advocate, solicitor or other professional advisor can speak for you if you prefer. The sub-committee produces a written report with recommendations for action to be implemented by the Head of Social Policy