

How to make a good complaint

When you purchase a service or goods you are entitled to certain things, such as a good quality products, timely service and good customer care.

See <u>Consumer advice</u> for more information on your rights as a consumer and what to do if you have problems with products or a service.

When to make a complaint

If you are not happy with the service or goods that you have received you can make a complaint, or in some cases you may be able to return the goods and secure a refund.

You should check with the organisation directly to see if they have a complaints procedure, which you can usually find on their website. There are some useful tips below on how to write a good complaint letter to make sure you get all of the issues across effectively and get the best outcome.

There are organisations in Newcastle who can help you if goods or services that you have bought are dangerous or unsafe.

If you believe you have been the victim of unfair trading practices such as cold calling, online scams, overcharging for work or deliberately misleading you, check the <u>Citizens Advice</u> website for advice..

If you have concerns about the safety of a product you can also report it to <u>Trading Standards at</u> Newcastle City Council.

How to complain effectively

Most organisations have a customer services department that you can direct any issues or complaints to, if not contact the head of the organisation.

- act quickly. This gives the organisation an opportunity to try to fix the problem for you.
- keep all evidence of your transaction with the organisation. This could include receipts, dates
 and times of phone calls, a record of who you spoke to on each occasion, quotations,
 contracts, emails, a guarantee or warranty.
- any supporting evidence of your complaint. This could include photographs or video footage of any damaged products

There are 4 main ways to complain:

- in person
- by telephone
- by letter
- online or by email

Complaining by telephone

- have all of the information that you need to hand
- speak to the person in charge; the manager or owner wherever possible
- explain what the problem is calmly and firmly
- make notes of the date, time and who you speak to or ask for a transcript or email
- make notes of what was said during your telephone conversation

Complaining in writing

It may be easier to make your complaint in writing if you do not wish to speak to the company. Writing a letter or email can also help you to document your complaint carefully, so you can refer back easily as the complaint progresses.

Writing a good complaint letter

- 1. Be concise and stick to the facts.
- 2. Include essential information relating to the product or service that you bought or received. For example: the date/time of the issue, location, name of person on duty, name of product, what the problem was, your account number, model number, price, warranty information and reference number. Keep original documents and scan and upload if necessary.
- 3. Explain clearly what the problem is
- 4. Explain the negative effect the problem has had for you and how disappointed you are in the service, but avoid making any personal attacks on the company or staff.
- 5. Explain what you would like to be done to fix the problem or issue. This could include an apology, a refund, a repair or a replacement product or training of staff..
- 6. Include a date by when you would like to receive a response by. This is usually around 14 days, but check their standard response time which may be up to 30 days
- 7. If the goods or services did not meet the legal requirements you can also mention the **Supply of Goods & Services Act** and the **Sale of Goods Act**.
- 8. Include the details of any additional expenses you have incurred as a result of the problem. Support this claim with receipts
- 9. Date the letter and indicate how they should contact you
- 10. Use recorded delivery, so you have record of when your sent the letter

Following your complaint

The organisation may offer to settle your complaint. This may be in the form of an apology, a refund, a repair or a replacement. You can either choose to accept this offer or continue to negotiate. Please note if you accept this offer you will probably not be able to ask for more compensation later on. If you are uncertain whether or not to accept the offer, you should seek further advice from Citizen's Advice.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint

If you are not happy with the response that you receive from the organisation there are other ways that you can complain.

Add the details to your complaint relating to your letter or phone calls which have not helped to resolve the problem. You could try to contact the complaint or customer service department again or ask to speak to the manager

Independent organisations you can complain to

If you are need to take your complaint further, some organisations or professions are governed by an independent body who you can direct your complaint to. They are often called an ombudsman. Here's a list of independent services that can help you to make a complaint:

Type of complaint	Independent organisation
Care services	Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of care services. This includes Hospitals, Care Homes, Dental, Home Care agencies, Mental Health, GP surgeries
Consumer Rights	Trading Standards Citizens Advice Newcastle
Energy Services: gas and electricity suppliers	Ombudsman Services: Energy
Finance	The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)

Health Services	Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) are a free, confidential, NHS advice service. They help patients, their families and carers give feedback on NHS services.
	The Patients Association is the national telephone and email helpline for anyone trying to navigate health and social care systems in the UK
	Parliamentary and health service Ombudsman independently investigate complaints about UK government departments and the NHS in England.
	Healthwatch Newcastle offer free, confidential and independent information about health and social care services
	Patient Safety Commissioner promotes patient safety with medicines and medical devices. They want to hear from patients about your experiences to help improve the healthcare services for everyone. Contact the commissioner to share your experience. Your feedback will help improve health care.
Housing services	Housing Ombudsman Service
Legal services	Legal Ombudsman can help you to complain about legal services
Social Care	Local Government Ombudsman looks at complaints about councils and some other organisations. They can help with complaints about education admissions appeal panels and adult social care providers (such as care homes and home care providers). Parliamentary and health service Ombudsman independently investigate complaints about UK government
	departments and the NHS in England.
Television Service	<u>Ofcom</u>

Trades people	Trading Standards Institute
Welfare Benefits	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

What happens if my complaint is still not resolved?

If your complaint is still not resolved, or the organisation does not reply to your complaints, you may consider taking legal advice and taking action in the small claims court.

- contact your <u>local court</u> for information on how to start your claim. You can also start a claim online at Her Majesty's Courts Service's **Money Claim Online**.
- seek independent legal advice
- if there has been an injury or a criminal offence, contact <u>Citizens Advice</u> for further advice before allowing the trader to rectify the problem

Court should be viewed as a last resort and even if your claim is successful there may be costs involved.

Advocacy - Get your voice heard

Advocacy is free, independent support to help you to get your voice heard. Advocacy services match you with an independent advocate who is on your side if you need support. They can:

- help you to find information
- talk things through with you to find out what you want
- support you to get your views across at appointments and meetings
- help you to understand your rights

There are a range of advocacy services in Newcastle if you are having problems understanding or arranging care or health services such as:

- Adult Social Care
- Community support
- Mental Health or do not have the mental capacity to make decisions for yourself
- NHS Health Care
- Dementia advocacy

Have your say about health services

You can help to improve our health services. You can volunteer to take part in groups or forums to make sure the views of patients, carers and the public are heard. Your feedback is used to improve health services in the North East of England.

How to make a complaint or compliment about other Newcastle City Council Services

<u>Complaints and Compliments at Newcastle City Council</u> can help if you are not happy with the service that you receive from the Council, or if you feel that something has gone wrong. If something has gone well, you can send them a compliment about the service too. Your feedback helps to improve the services.

Visit their website for more details about how to make a complaint or send a compliment about these services:

- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- schools
- Councillors
- housing
- all other council services such as, bins and roads

Other useful information

<u>Resolver</u> is a free website that helps you make complaints online. The website will take you through the complaints process step by step, explain your rights to you and help you write an email of complaint.

<u>Which? Consumer Rights</u> provide a comprehensive list of template letters of complaint that you can use free of charge.

Last updated: March 5, 2025

Useful Organisations

Citizens Advice Newcastle (CAN)

Email: citycab@newcastlecab.org.uk

Website: http://citizensadvice-newcastle.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Address: 4th Floor, City Library, NE1 8AX

Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)

Email: consumer.queries@fca.org.uk

Website: www.fca.org.uk

Telephone: 0800 111 6768

Address: 25 The North Colonnade, E14 5HS

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Email: pals@nhct.nhs.uk

Website: https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/hospitals/what-is-pals-patient-advice-and-liaison-

service/

Telephone: 0800 032 0202

Address: Freepost PALS,

Complaints and Customer Relations Adult Social Care at Newcastle City Council

Email: ComplaintsAdults@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/information-and-support-

adults/contact-care-and-support-adults/make-a-complaint

Telephone: 0191 277 7427

Address: Complaints and Customer Relations, Adult Care and Support, NE1 8PA

Trading Standards – Newcastle City Council

Email: tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/tradingstandards

Telephone: 0191 277 7427

Address: Newcastle Civic Centre, NE1 8QH

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Email: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

Website: www.cqc.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 061 6161

Address: CQC National Customer Service Centre, NE1 4PA

Ofcom

Website: www.ofcom.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040

Address: Riverside House, SE1 9HA

Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS)

Email: complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk

Telephone: 0800 023 4567

Address: South Quay Plaza, E14 9SR

Complaints and Compliments at Newcastle City Council

Website: https://new.newcastle.gov.uk/complaints-compliments

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Complaints at Newcastle, NE99 2BN

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Address: PO Box 4771, CV4 0EH

Citizens Advice

Website: www.adviceguide.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Address: Citizens Advice, EC1A 4HD

Trading Standards Institute

Website: http://www.tradingstandards.uk/advice/index.cfm

Telephone: 03444 111 444

Legal Ombudsman

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

Telephone: 03444 111 444

Address: PO Box 6806, WV1 9WJ

Money Claim Online

Email: ccbc@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.moneyclaim.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 1057

Address: 4th Floor St Katharine's House, NN1 2LH

Ombudsman Association

Email: secretary@ombudsmanassociation.org

Website: www.ombudsmanassociation.org

Telephone: 0300 123 1057

Address: Leonard House, BR1 1RJ

Energy Ombudsman

Email: enquiry@energyombudsman.org

Website: http://www.ombudsman-services.org

Telephone: 0330 440 1624

Address: PO Box 966, WA4 9DF

Resolver

Website: http://www.resolver.co.uk/

Telephone: 0330 440 1624

Which? Consumer Rights

Email: support@which.co.uk

Website: http://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights

Telephone: 020 7770 7000

Address: 3 Capital Quarter, CF10 4BZ

Relay UK

Website: https://www.relayuk.bt.com/

Telephone: 0800 7311 888

Address: Relay UK Team, PR1 1BA

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Website: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions

Telephone: 0800 7311 888

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Telephone: 0800 7311 888

The Housing Ombudsman Service

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, L33 7WQ

Patient Safety Commissioner

Email: pscenguiries@patientsafetycommissioner.org.uk

Website: https://www.patientsafetycommissioner.org.uk/

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Address: Patient Safety Commissioner, SW1P 3HZ

Adult Social CarePoint at Newcastle City Council

Email: ASCP@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/AdultSocialCare

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Adult Social CarePoint Newcastle City Council, NE4 9LU

Related Articles

How to make a complaint about Adult Social Care services

Having your say about health and care services

Your Consumer Rights

Where to get legal advice

Fraud and scams

How to challenge a benefit decision

Advocacy support to get your voice heard