

# Complaints Policy

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<b>Department:</b>	<b>Customer Experience</b>
<b>Document ID:</b>	614499
<b>Approved by:</b>	CEO
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## Purpose:

To provide a fair and transparent process for the resolution of formal complaints.

## Principles and objectives:

Central Otago District Council commits to act fairly, timely, openly, and with integrity in the management of formal complaints.

## Scope:

This policy applies to complaints against Central Otago District Council, including any employees or contractors. Some complaints about building inspectors are referred to the Building Consent Complaints Process.

This policy manages complaints raised by members of the public or other groups or individuals for further action or consideration through formal channels. It is not intended to manage requests for service and complaints that can be resolved through business as usual.

## Definitions:

<b>Complaint</b>	For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is defined as a statement expressing dissatisfaction with a particular situation <b>and</b> requiring consideration through formal channels.
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## Policy:

Council operates a three step complaints process, aiming to resolve complaints as quickly as possible.

Step	Action
<b>Step One</b>	A complaint can be received by any member of staff.
Initial formal complaint	<p>When identifying the correspondence as a formal complaint, it is raised and referred to the appropriate business unit for a response.</p> <p>All complaints are acknowledged within 2 working days. This acknowledgement will contain the timeframe for any further correspondence.</p>
<b>Step two</b>	Where this initial response is unable to satisfy or resolve the issue, an escalation is made to a third-tier manager or member of the executive team for consideration.
Escalation	
<b>Step three</b>	If the customer is not satisfied with the response by the business unit, they can request a review be carried out.
Executive review	This review will be carried out by either the relevant executive manager, a different executive manager, or the Chief Executive.
<b>Specialist</b>	An alternate process may be required when the issues remain unresolved after following each step, or if the issues raised are highly sensitive or complex.
	In these circumstances, an alternative approach is developed and communicated to the customer, along with any related timeframes.

If Council is unable to reach a resolution with the complainant, the complainant will be made aware of their right to contact the Ombudsman.

Complainant privacy and record keeping are maintained in line with the relevant policies and procedures.

### Investigation

Council follows internal processes to undertake investigations of complaints, related to the detail of the complaint itself. For instance, if a complaint relates to the behaviour of a member of staff the relevant People and Culture process will be followed.

Due to staff privacy, in some circumstances a complainant may not be provided the detail of the outcome of a resolution; however, they will receive an update when the matter is closed.

### **Complaints about the Chief Executive**

Complaints about the Chief Executive or Executive Management can be made through this standard complaints process.

If preferred, these complaints can also be addressed through an independent process.

Independent complaints can be received by either the Mayor or the Independent Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. They are managed independently with the Governance Manager.

All independent complaints are considered 'specialised' complaints. The process and any timeframes will be set and communicated directly to the customer by the Governance Manager, Mayor, or Independent Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

### **Unreasonable complainant conduct**

Most customers who contact Council act reasonably and responsibly, even if they are experiencing distress, frustration or anger about their complaint or concern. In rare circumstances customer behaviour may be considered unreasonable conduct. The Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy applies in these circumstances.

## **Relevant legislation:**

- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Local Government Information and Meetings Act 1987
- Ombudsman Complaints about Public Sector Agencies Process
- Privacy Act 2021

## **Related documents:**

- Building Consent Complaints Process
- Privacy Policy
- Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy