

Watford Borough Council's Self-assessment against the requirements of the Code

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
1: Definition of a service request and complaint	We recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint, and these are defined in our policies and procedures.	Yes	<p>Watford Borough Council recognises the difference between a service request and a complaint. This is detailed in our complaints policy under sections 2 and 10 and also on our website here: https://www.watford.gov.uk/council-13/make-complaint</p> <p>For example a service request could be a customer requesting a replacement bin timetable which is not considered a complaint. A complaint is raised when a customer wishes to express a dissatisfaction about a council service that requires a response. Therefore, using the example above a customer could raise a complaint if the replacement bin timetable they requested was not sent out.</p>

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
2: Exclusions	Our complaints policy sets out circumstances where we would not consider a complaint. These are reasonable and do not deny individuals access to redress.	Yes	<p>Watford Borough Council sets out the enquiries that are not considered complaints. These are detailed in our complaints policy under section 10 and also on our website here: https://www.watford.gov.uk/council-13/make-complaint</p> <p>For example these could be requests to challenge parking fines, which are handled under a separate appeals process outside of our complaints policy. In these instances we would advise the individual of the correct process to follow.</p>
3: Accessibility and awareness	We provide different channels through which individuals can make complaints. These are accessible and we can make reasonable adjustments where necessary	Yes	<p>Watford Borough Council is committed to making their complaints process as accessible as possible. We accept complaints via a variety of formats such as through email, in writing, over the telephone, in person and via a form on our website. This is detailed in our policy under section 6.4. The complainant can also request to have their response in an alternative format and can request to have a meeting to discuss their complaint as mentioned on our website.</p>

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
4: Complaint handling resources	We have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. Complaints are viewed as a core service and resourced accordingly.	es	Watford Borough Council have a designated Customer Services Team, that manage the handling of complaints. We also have Customer Liaison Officers (CLOs) who take responsibility for complaint handling across their service. Each service across the council has at least 1 CLO assigned with a backup, so in the event of absence complaints are still adequately resourced. If there is no backup CLO then it is assigned to a manager. We also have a staff guide which supports staff in handling customer complaints.
5: The complaint handling process	We have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code and individuals are given the option of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction that meets the definition of the complaint in our policy.	Yes	Watford Borough Council have an up to date policy which covers the Code and outlines and details our complaints procedure. On our website we also detail the complaint process for individuals to follow which can be found here: https://www.watford.gov.uk/council-13/make-complaint

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
6: Complaints stages (Stage 1)	We process stage 1 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	Yes	<p>Watford Borough Council have a clearly defined Stage 1 complaints process set out in the Code, and this is documented in our policy under section 6. We investigate and respond to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days and will tell the customer if we are not able to respond within these timescales. Any extensions should be no longer than 10 working days and we will always inform the customer. This is also captured as part of our complaints reporting process. The response will include a detailed outcome.</p> <p>Our 2023/2024 complaints performance shows that we partly achieved this with an average response time of 11.2 days for Stage 1 complaints.</p>

<p>6: Complaints stages (Stage 2)</p>	<p>We process stage 2 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Watford Borough Council have a clearly defined Stage 2 complaints process set out in the Code, and this is documented in our policy under section 7. If a resolution is not met at Stage 1 then the complainant can escalate to Stage 2. The relevant Service Delivery Lead will review the stage 2 complaint and refer it to an appropriate handling officer for investigation and response within 10 working days. We will tell the customer if we are not able to respond within these timescales and any extension should be no longer than 20 working days. The response will include a detailed outcome.</p> <p>If the complainant remains unhappy with the stage 2 outcome, we advise they can approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman</p> <p>Our 2023/2024 complaints performance shows that we partly achieved this with 66.7 % of Stage 2 complaints being responded to in time.</p>
<p>7: Putting things right</p>	<p>When something has gone wrong we take action to put things right.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Watford Borough Council are dedicated to putting things right and this is documented in our policy under section 14. We use complaints feedback to improve our services, and this is detailed in our reporting under Lessons Learnt and included as part of our annual complaints report.</p>

<p>8: Performance reporting and self-assessment</p>	<p>We produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge which includes a self-assessment against the Code.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Watford Borough Council produce an annual complaints performance report which includes our performance and service improvements. The report also identifies trends and highlights any action taken as a result of feedback given. The annual report is published on our website here: https://www.watford.gov.uk/downloads/download/294/performance-and-progress-reports</p> <p>This self-assessment document will be included as part of our annual report starting from the 2023/2034 complaints report. This ensures we remain compliant against the Code.</p>
<p>9: Scrutiny & Oversight</p>	<p>We have appropriate senior leadership and governance oversight of the complaints process and performance.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Watford Borough Council have a Councillor as a lead member with complaints, and Senior leadership and other members have oversight of the complaints process and review the annual report. They also review and monitor our quarterly complaints performance. Our annual complaints report goes to Cabinet for review prior to publication on our website.</p>