

Complaints Procedure

midland heart
housing, care and opportunity



About us

Newcastle Housing Advice (NHA) is a service delivered by Midland Heart under contract for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, giving homelessness, housing advice and housing register services to residents in the Borough and as such NHA have adopted the Borough Council's Complaints Procedure. NHA is committed to providing a high standard of customer service to all residents in the Borough but there may be times when you feel that we have not done this.

NHA welcomes complaints as a valuable form of feedback about its service and working with Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is committed to using information gained from complaints to help drive forward improvements to services and to better meet the needs of customers.

Most problems can be resolved informally by speaking directly to staff in the Team but where you are not satisfied with the response you receive, this leaflet explains how to make a complaint.

What is a complaint?

“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standards of service, actions or lack of action by NHA, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.”

Complaints will generally include;

- Failure to provide a service at the level or standard expected by the Council and NHA.
- The unhelpful attitude of an NHA team member.
- Neglect, or delay in answering a query or responding to a request for a service.
- Failure to follow the NHA's agreed policies, rules or procedures.
- Malice, bias or unfair discrimination, in particular discrimination or harassment on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race or sexual orientation.

Complaints will generally exclude;

- Complaints that amount to a disagreement with NHA about its decisions or policies rather than the way decisions have been made.
- Complaints that amount to a disagreement with, or refusal to accept, a rule of law which the Council or their agent is applying, for example, a request for

the review of a Homeless Decision - Section 202 of the Housing Act (1996) as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002), as these will be addressed through the Homeless Decision Reviews Procedure, of copy of which is available on request, unless the complaint is about how the matter has been administered.

- A complaint that is, or could reasonably be expected to be, the subject of court or tribunal proceedings.
- Requests for information or an explanation of a policy or procedure.

How can a complaint be made?

- In person at the address on the back of this leaflet.
- By telephoning the NHA Team on **0345 850 9698**.
- In writing (letter, or email) to NHA at the address on the back of this leaflet.
- Via the Council's website – www.newcastlestaffs.gov.uk
- Via your local Councillor.

Our complaints procedure has two stages at which a complaint can be dealt with. If you tell us that you are not satisfied with the response you receive, your complaint will be automatically passed on to the next stage.

What will happen at court?

Once we have received and registered your complaint we will acknowledge it within 3 working days of receipt, investigate your complaint and send a full reply within 20 working days of receipt (unless the complaint is dealt with on the spot).

If the complaint cannot be resolved straight away, such as in cases where further investigation is required, a holding reply will be sent informing you when a full reply can be expected.

If you are not satisfied with your response you can progress your complaint to Stage 2.

Stage 2 - Independent internal appeal

If you contact us to inform us that you are not happy with our reply at Stage 1, the Customer Relations Officer at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council will independently investigate your complaint.

When requesting a Stage 2 – Independent Internal Appeal, you should identify which elements of your complaint you feel has not been adequately addressed.

The Stage 2 request will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and responded to in full within 20 working days but if it is anticipated that a response will take longer due to the complexity of the situation, the Customer Relations Officer will keep you informed of progress.

Local Government Ombudsman investigation

You can ask the Local Government Ombudsman to investigate your complaint at any time however, the Ombudsman may ask you about what efforts, if any, you have made to resolve your concerns personally and locally with us and will encourage and assist you to make this effort. The Ombudsman will expect you to have followed our own complaints procedure before contacting them.

The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted in writing at;

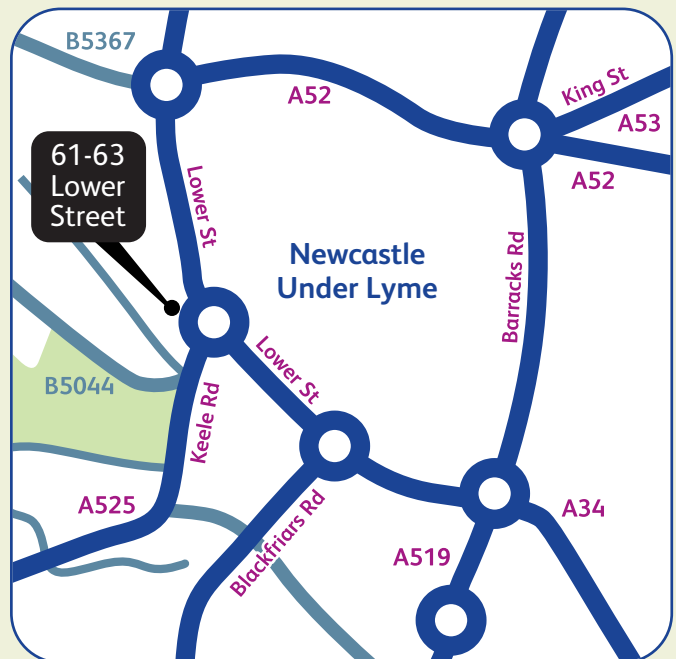
**The Local Government Ombudsman,
The Oaks No 2,
Westwood Way,
Westwood Business Park,
Coventry
CV4 8JB**

The web site address is www.lgo.org.uk

Alternatively, the Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted;

- by telephone on **024 7682 0000** or the Advice line number on **0845 602 1983**
- by fax on **024 7682 0001**
- by e-mail; enquiries@lgo.org.uk

How to contact us



The Newcastle Housing Advice Centre is located at **61-63 Lower Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs, ST5 2RS**

Tel: **0345 850 9698**
email nha@midlandheart.org.uk
www.nhaoptions.co.uk

Our opening hours:
Monday to Friday 9am until 5pm

For homelessness emergencies out of the normal office hours, you can call 01782 615 599

Appointments can be made by telephone or in person by calling into the reception at NHA Lower Street, Newcastle.

www.nhaoptions.co.uk