



Concerns and Complaints Policy

Valleys To Coast (V2C) is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure.

If possible, we will put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you are entitled to in line with the Tenants' Guarantee which we have failed to deliver. If we got something wrong, we will apologise and offer redress if appropriate. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal so, rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us (e.g. how your housing benefit has been calculated) so we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.

Have you asked us yet?

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time, (e.g. reporting a repair) then this policy does not apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you are dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff cannot help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern in any of the ways below.

- You can ask for a copy of our *Concern/Complaint* form (Appendix 1) from the person with whom you are already in contact with, or from our Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 2100. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern formally.
- You can use the form on our website at www.v2c.org.uk/complaints
- You can e-mail us at complaints@v2c.org.uk

Dealing with your concern

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within **5 working days** and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you.
- We will deal with all concerns in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that no one is disadvantaged because they have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within six months. This is because it is better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind. We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly.

If you are expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

What if there is more than one body involved?

If your concern covers more than one body, (e.g. V2C and Bridgend County Borough Council regarding street lighting) we will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns.

You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your concern. If the concern is about a body working on our behalf, (e.g. Lovell Partnerships), we will look into your concern ourselves and respond to you.

Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we will usually ask somebody from V2C to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, or in certain cases we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.

The person looking at your concern will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your concerns. **If you do not want this to happen it is important that you tell us.**

If there is a simple solution to your problem we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 10 working days. If your concern is more complex, we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concern will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan. In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns.

Occasionally, we might suggest mediation to try to resolve disputes. We will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

Outcome

If we investigate your concern, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report.

We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. We will show how the mistake affected you. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

Redress

If we did not provide a service you should have had, we will aim to provide it now, if that is possible. If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right.

If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

If you had to pay for a service yourself when you should have had one from us we will usually aim to make good what you have lost.

Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman can look into

your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- has been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it
- has been disadvantaged personally by maladministration or service failure.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- phone: 0845 601 0987
- e-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- the website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made.

Our senior management team considers a summary of all complaints quarterly as well as details of any serious complaints. Our Board also considers our response to complaints at least twice a year.

Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

What if I need help

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact Citizen's Advice, who may be able to assist you.

What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights.

We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations where we find that someone's actions are unacceptable. (Unacceptable behaviour By Customers policy.)



Concern/Complaint Form

A. Your details:

Surname:	Forename:	Title: Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms if other, please state:
Address and postcode:		
Email address:		
Daytime contact number:		
Mobile number:		

Please state by which of the above methods you would prefer us to contact you:

Your requirements: if our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English or Welsh is not your first language or you need to engage with us in a particular way, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B. **Note: we will not release information about this person(s) until we receive their authorisation.**

B. Making a complaint on behalf of someone else.

Their name in full:	
Their address and postcode:	
What is your relationship to them:	
Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?	
Your mobile number:	
Their signature:	

C. About the concern/complaint.

(Please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary.)

C.1 Name of the department/section/service the complaint is about:
C.2 What do you think they did wrong, or failed to do?
C.3 Describe how you personally have suffered or have been affected.
C.4 What do you think should be done to put things right?
C.5 When did you first become aware of the problem?
C.6 Have you already put your concern to the frontline staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.
C.7 If it is more than 6 months since you became first aware of the problem, please give the reason why you have not complained before now.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form.

When you have completed this form, please send it to Valleys To Coast, 1 Court Road, Bridgend. CF31 1BE, or email it to complaints@v2c.org.uk.