



Complaints procedure

Your right to complain

Every year the Citizens Advice service helps millions of people. However, every so often someone comes away from a bureau feeling unhappy. Perhaps you had to wait for ages, only to find out that there is very little we can do for you. Perhaps you felt that you were not treated with respect or courtesy. Perhaps our advice didn't help or was wrong.

Unfortunately, these things happen. We know we are not perfect. But we aim to be. That is why we have a complaints procedure. Sometimes we can put things right; sometimes we can only explain ourselves and apologize. But we do want to learn from our mistakes. What you tell us helps to improve our service to you.

We will treat your complaint confidentially, seriously and quickly.

What can I do?

It is important to let the bureau know that you are unhappy and to give them the chance to put things right. Don't be afraid to speak to the manager or deputy manager – she or he might be able to sort out the problem straight away. Otherwise, move to the more formal process.

If you are not a client, ask the bureau manager to explain the Third Party complaints procedure to you.

Making a formal complaint

Review by Citizens Advice

There are several ways to make a complaint. You can put the information in a letter and send it to us at Barnards Yard, Saffron Walden, CB11 4EB, or drop it into the bureau. You can tell the bureau on the phone or face-to-face that you want them to investigate your complaint.

If you prefer, you can ask National Citizens Advice to refer your complaint to the bureau. You can complain via Citizens Advice by calling our complaints line on 03000 231 900. Or you can email your complaint to feedback@citizensadvice.org.uk Citizens Advice will assess who is the best person to handle your complaint and ask them to deal with it.

Your complaint will be investigated by the bureau manager under the direction of the chair of the bureau, or by the chair if you are complaining about the manager. They will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and carry out a full investigation into the circumstances surrounding it. The records of your visit will be examined to check that proper procedures were followed and the best advice given. The target time for responding in full to a complaint is 20 working days, though, if the issue is complicated, any delay will be explained.

If the complaint is upheld, you will receive a full apology and, where appropriate, be given details of any action that the bureau was able to take to retrieve the situation or at least put things right for the future. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can ask for a further review. The bureau will tell you how to do this.

The aim is always to achieve resolution at the earliest stage possible. The local manager of Uttlesford Citizens Advice is **Kate Robson** and she can be contacted via email on kate.robson@uttlesfordca.org.uk. The Chair of Uttlesford Citizens Advice is **Richard Armitage** and he can be contacted via email on chair@uttlesfordca.org.uk

Review of your complaint

If you are still not happy after the bureau's response, you can request a further review.

The review will be conducted under the direction of the Citizens Advice Chief Executive. If you are still not happy, you can ask for your complaint to be looked at by an Independent Adjudicator.

Now that the complaint is being examined by Citizens Advice central office rather than the local bureau, the Chief Executive will not concentrate so much on the detail of the case but ensure that the process has been carried out properly and will check that the fundamental issues have been investigated fully.

Within five working days we will acknowledge your complaint, and the review will be sent to you within 20 working days of the receipt of your file from the bureau.

Once again, the review will produce a full response, which will contain sufficient information to show that the complaint has been fully investigated, and an apology where appropriate. Details will be given of your right for a further review.

Review by an Adjudicator

Finally, your complaint may go to a person who is entirely separate from the Citizens Advice service. This person is called the Independent Adjudicator. She or he conducts a review of the investigation to check:

- that the investigation has been conducted in line with the stated procedure
- that the investigation has been handled fairly.

The Adjudicator will not comment on the substance of your complaint.

Should the Adjudicator find that the stated procedure was not followed or that the matter has not been handled fairly, the Adjudicator will specify why and may give directions for a re-investigation.

The decision of the Independent Adjudicator is final.

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If you want to progress to this stage, you must do so within four weeks of receiving the Citizens Advice review.

Financial Ombudsman Service

The Financial Ombudsman Service provides a free, independent service for clients to solve disputes with not for profit debt advice providers.

The Financial Ombudsman Service will only step in once the bureau has had the opportunity to investigate matters, so please contact the bureau first.

If your complaint is about debt advice or if you were seeking advice about your credit record and you are not satisfied with the bureau's final response or if eight weeks have passed since you first let the bureau know about your concerns, you can ask the Financial Ombudsman to review your complaint.

Contact the Financial Ombudsman Service

By post:

Financial Ombudsman Service
South Quay Plaza
183 Marsh Wall
London E14 9SR

By phone:

0800 0 234 567 – free for people phoning from a 'fixed' line (eg a landline at home)
0300 123 9 123 – free for mobile phone users who pay a monthly charge for calls to numbers starting 01 and 02.

By email:

complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk

Website:

www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk