

# Complaints procedure

## Your right to complain

Every year the Citizens Advice service helps millions of people. However, every so often someone comes away 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 apologise. 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 us know that you are unhappy so that we can try to put things right. Don't be afraid to speak to our CEO – she might be able to sort out the problem straight away. Otherwise, you can move to the more formal process.

If you are not a client, ask our CEO 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 Regus Epping, the Civic Building, 2nd floor, 323 High Street, Epping, CM16 4BZ, or you can tell us on the phone or in person that you want us to investigate your complaint.

If you prefer, you can ask National Citizens Advice to refer your complaint to us. 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](mailto: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 CEO under the direction of the Chair of Trustees, or by the Chair of Trustees if you are complaining about the CEO. 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 we were 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. We will tell you how to do this.

The aim is always to achieve resolution at the earliest stage possible. The CEO of Citizens Advice Epping Forest District is Jo O'Boyle and she can be contacted via email on [jo.oboyle@citizensadviceefd.org.uk](mailto:jo.oboyle@citizensadviceefd.org.uk) The Chair of Trustees at Citizens Advice Epping Forest District is Jean Wells and she can be contacted via email on [jean.wells@citizensadviceefd.org.uk](mailto:jean.wells@citizensadviceefd.org.uk)

## Review of your complaint

If you are still not happy after you have received our 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 office, 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 Citizens Advice Epping Forest District.

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 reinvestigation.

The decision of the Independent Adjudicator is final.

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 Uttlesford Citizens Advice has had the opportunity to investigate matters, so please contact us 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](tel:08000234567) – free for people phoning from a 'fixed' line (eg a landline at home)  
[0300 123 9 123](tel:03001239123) – 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](mailto:complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk)

Website:

[www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk)