

How to make a complaint



What are my rights?

There are several ways to make a complaint if you have been dealing with a problem. This booklet will take you through possible complaint options.

It is important that your voice is heard and we hope this guide is helpful.



connecting
equalities

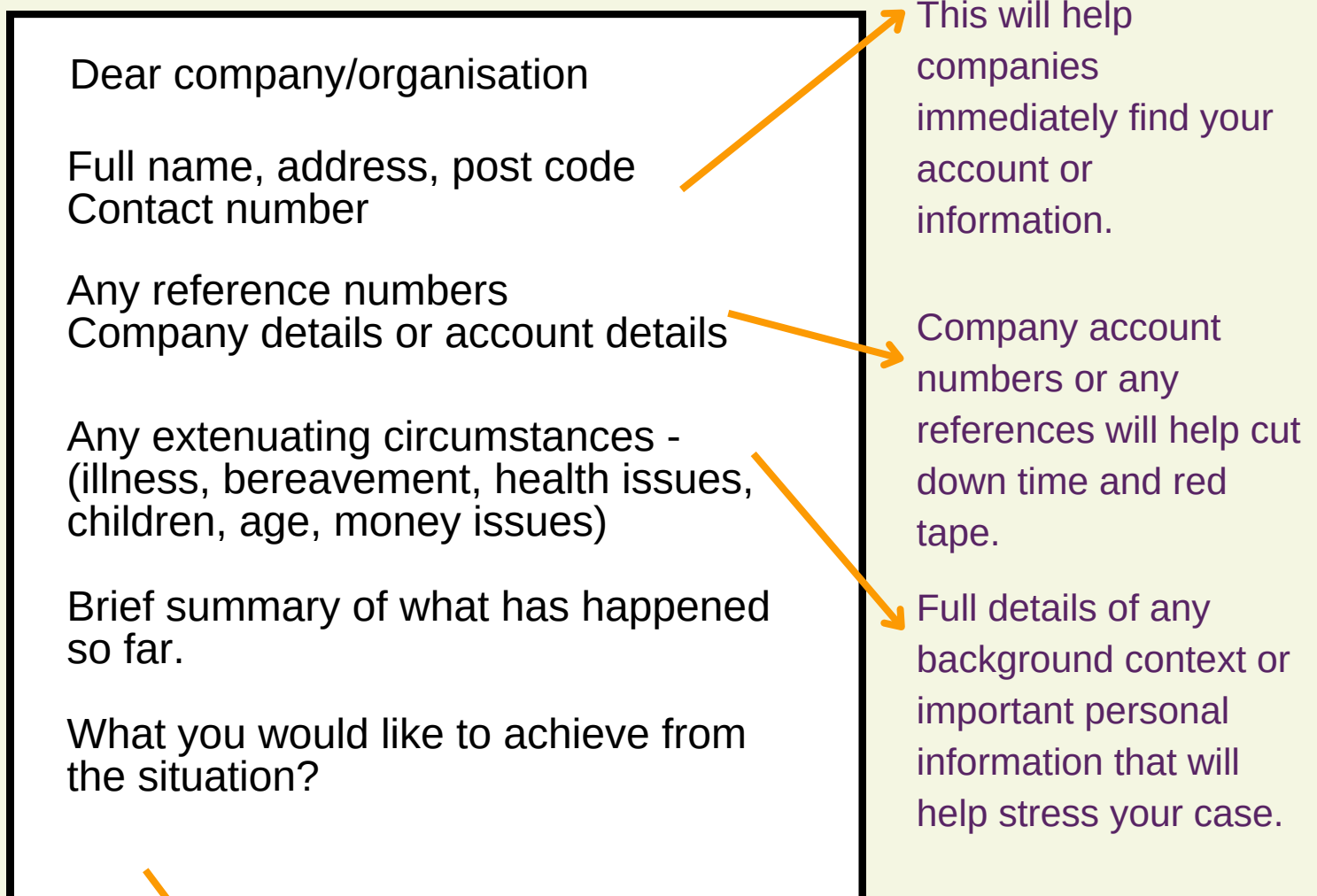


outside the box

What to include in your complaint correspondence

When making a complaint to a company or organisation you will want to include as much detail as you can in as few words as possible.

The below diagram notes what information will be useful to put in your correspondence:



A short, brief summary of events will help the complaints team progress with your complaint. It's helpful for them to know whom you have already contacted or spoken to on the matter.

Top tips for your correspondence

Details

If you are making a complaint about a specific experience like a member of staff, a train or bus journey, be sure to include the time, location, description of the staff and any numbers like the bus number.

Stick to the facts

Make sure you stick to the facts and try to make your complaint as short but as detailed as possible. A longer piece of correspondence may take longer for the complaint to be actioned. Keep your complaint as polite and courteous as possible. This can often help the complaints process go smoothly.

A trusted person

It might be helpful to get a trusted person to check over your complaint before you email or submit it. They will not be as close emotionally to the problem and might have a different, helpful perspective.

Deadlines

If you feel that correspondence is going back and forth without a solution in sight, give a deadline for them to respond. It might be helpful to give a deadline of 14 days for example, before you escalate the complaint to your elected representative or Ombudsman service.

Making a complaint to a private company

Complaints form

When you wish to make a complaint to a company, organisation or Council there is usually a complaints form you can fill out. These forms can be found on the company's website. If you cannot find a complaints form or procedure, you should contact them and ask how best to raise a complaint.

It will be helpful to put your complaint in writing either by email or by post. Organisations like Citizens Advice can help you if you feel like you need a bit of support drafting your correspondence.

Escalating complaint

Some complaints procedures will have several stages. Often you must go through these stages before you can escalate the complaint to the Ombudsman.

Organisations may take a few weeks to gather information before they respond to you. If you have not heard back within 20 working days it may be helpful to contact your local Citizens Advice branch or your elected representative.

Compensation

You may be entitled to compensation depending on whom you are complaining to. The compensation may come in the form of a voucher, discount or full reimbursement. If you are complaining to an energy provider, broadband provider or similar, it may be helpful to ask about their price guarantee policies and compensation options if you feel you may be entitled a refund or compensation.

Escalating to the Ombudsman Service

Ombudsman services are free and independent schemes that look into complaints about companies and organisations.

You should try to resolve your complaint with the company or organisation first, before you contact the relevant Ombudsman service.

Most Ombudsman services have websites that detail how to make a complaint. You can usually make a complaint via an online form or by post.

You can request an ombudsman to investigate your complaint if the organisation or company has taken too long to resolve it. This is usually around 8 weeks.

The Ombudsman Association website has a list of all the Ombudsman services available to you and more information on how to make a complaint:

<https://www.ombudsmanassociation.org/>



Contacting your MP or MSP

When going through a complaints procedure people often get in touch with their elected representative.

If you haven't heard back from a company or service after a reasonable time period it might be worth contacting your MP or MSP for help.

The MP or MSP's office can make enquiries on your behalf and will let you know when they receive a response.

Elected members have access to hotlines and more direct contacts with a lot of companies and departments.

Often contact from an MP or MSP can press a company or organisation to respond and progress your complaint.

Correspondence from an MP or MSP can also help to get clarification on what stage your complaint is at and your next possible steps.

Sometimes you will need to fill out a consent form to enable your elected representative to act on your behalf.

If you are contacting an elected member on behalf of a family member or friend, another consent form will need to be signed. This makes sure that the family member or friend has consented to you contacting and dealing with the elected member on their behalf.

For more information on how to contact your elected representatives, check out our Connecting Equalities guide: <https://otbds.org/contacting-your-elected-representatives/>

Useful contacts

MP

You find out who your MP is by putting in your postcode on [this website](#).

MSP

There is a similar website for [finding out your MSP](#). Once you have put in your postcode, you will be able to find their contact details to get in touch via email, letter or phone.

Councillor

To find out who your local Councillors are, you will need to go to your local Council website. Each Council website will have a dedicated section for putting in your postcode to find out who they are and how best to contact them.

Community Police

You can find the contact details for all the different areas of Scotland on this community [Police Scotland website](#).

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

You can find the contact details for your local CAB office on the [main website](#). You can make appointments to meet with advisers or contact them by email or phone.

Third Sector Interface (TSI)

Third sector interfaces (TSIs) provide a single point of access for support and advice for voluntary or community groups within local areas. There is a TSI in each local authority area in Scotland. You can find their contact details on the Scottish Government [website](#).

Equality and Human Rights Commission

The [Commission](#) works to reduce inequality and protect and promote human rights in Scotland.



Connecting Equalities is a Scottish Government funded project for Equalities and Human Rights. We work alongside diverse groups of older people connecting their everyday experiences to rights and equalities to help shape what matters to them for a good life.

To read more about the project and see our other resources check out our website:
<https://otbds.org/projects/connecting-equalities/>

