



## Making a complaint

There are times when sadly, something goes wrong and we need to make a complaint. The key thing is to complain constructively to give you the best chance of getting a positive outcome and to help highlight a problem to ensure the same thing doesn't happen again to someone else.

### Common areas of complaints for Army families

#### Housing

##### **I am unhappy with the repair on my house, who do I complain to?**

If you need to make a complaint about the service from or repairs carried out by Carillion Amey (CA) there are three stages to making a complaint:

##### **How to make a complaint to CA:**

1. Call the CA Helpdesk on 0800 707 6000 option 5 or email [customer-care@carillionamey.co.uk](mailto:customer-care@carillionamey.co.uk) and make a complaint. You will be given a complaint reference number and CA will answer your complaint within 15 working days. If you have emailed them, they will acknowledge your complaint within 24 hours. Make sure that you are very clear about what you are complaining about and what you would like the outcome to be.
2. If you have had a First Stage complaint closed by CA and aren't happy with the outcome, you can raise a Second Stage complaint by writing to the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) at DIO Service Delivery Accommodation, Ground Floor, Swales Pavilion, RAF Wyton, Cambridgeshire, PE28 2EA. You need to include full details and your reference number. If you are a Service person and have access to DII, you can complete the Stage 2 complaint form online. DIO will send an acknowledgement within 3 working days. However, there is no response time for a Stage 2 resolution.
3. If you are unhappy with the response you receive from the Second Stage complaint, you can write to the Independent Housing Review Panel at Defence People Service Personnel Support, Accommodation Policy 2, Ministry of Defence, Floor 6, Zone A, Main Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB

Full information is available at

[http://www.aff.org.uk/army\\_family\\_life/housing/complaints.htm](http://www.aff.org.uk/army_family_life/housing/complaints.htm)

##### **My quarter allocation was handled badly, I want to complain**

You need to complain to CA following the above 3 stage process.

##### **I live in SSFA, how do I complain?**

You should initially contact MEARS on 08000324547 or email them at [resident.enquiry@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:resident.enquiry@mearsgroup.co.uk). The contact the Substitute Accommodation Team on 0148052451 ext 8681 or email them on [dioopsaccn-hqsubaccom@mod.uk](mailto:dioopsaccn-hqsubaccom@mod.uk)

##### **I had a problem with move in/out and am unhappy, what do I do?**

You need to complain to CA following the instructions above.

##### **Is there any other way I can complain about Carillion Amey?**

You can also make a comment or complaint regarding CA via their official Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/carillionamey/?fref=ts>). However, unless you state that you

want to make a complaint, it will be dealt with but won't be logged as an official complaint. You can also tweet them on @CarillionAmey.

### **How long will it take for CA or DIO to resolve the complaint?**

CA have 15 working days to respond to a Stage 1 complaint.

DIO will acknowledge a Stage 2 complaint within three working days. An investigation will be carried out but depending on the nature of the complaint, this can take some time and as such there is no time line for resolution of a Stage 2 complaint.

## **Problems on camp**

### **The play park on camp is in a poor state, what can I do about it?**

If you have any issues with facilities on camp, it is worth first raising with your Unit Welfare Office to see whether they are aware of any action being taken.

If the park on camp is in a poor state and it requires repair, you should report this to MHS who are responsible for the maintenance of play park equipment, grounds/surfacing and any fences. If there is damage caused by vandalism, any repairs have to be funded by the Unit, so you should contact the Station Commander/Commanding Officer or equivalent.

If you would like the park to be upgraded, this needs to be funded by MOD and provided by DIO. You should contact the Station Commander/Commanding Officer or equivalent of the camp and ask them to make a request for an upgrade to the Ops Accommodation Regional Manager, who will consider the case and decide whether it is added to their future upgrades programme. However, the MOD has to provide funding and it has to be assessed whether this is a high priority, when compared to repairs required to combat mould or upgrade kitchens.

### **Our roads haven't been gritted in terrible snow; surely someone should do something about it?**

If your quarter is outside the wire, you need to contact your local council, who has responsibility for maintaining the roads. Firstly, contact the relevant council department to see why the roads have not been gritted. If you are unhappy with their explanation, contact your local councillor to see whether they can provide any assistance.

If your quarter is inside the wire, it is the responsible of the Unit to ensure that the roads are gritted. Contact the Unit Welfare Office in the first instance to see if they can explain why the roads have not been gritted and what action may be being taken. If you are unhappy with the plan and wish to complain to the Station Commander/Commanding Officer or equivalent, then writing is the best way and ask your Unit Welfare Office for the correct person to send the letter to.

**I live within the wire and it is difficult booking in deliveries, I am really fed up with it**  
Contact the Guardroom to check what the policy is for booking in deliveries. If you are still unhappy with the procedure, you need to write to your Station Commander or equivalent to explain your reasons for believing the policy to be incorrect and any evidence or information to assist your argument to change it.

## **Health**

### **I am unhappy with the service I received from the NHS, how do I complain?**

If you are not happy with an NHS service you can make a complaint. You should complain to your service provider such as GP, dentist, hospital or pharmacist first. Or alternatively you can submit a complaint to the relevant commissioning body, your local CCG or NHS England. It is best to submit a complaint as soon as possible and within 12 months of the event.

### **I have a complaint about a GP, nurse or hospital, what do I do next?**

In the first instance ask your GP, hospital or trust for a copy of its complaints procedure, which will explain how to proceed. Initially it is best to raise the matter in writing or by

talking to the practitioner e.g. the nurse or doctor concerned, or with their organisation, which will have a complaints manager.

### **Commissioning Services**

If you prefer, you can raise the matter with the relevant commissioning body such as NHS England or a local CCG. The process is called local resolution, and most cases are resolved at this stage.

To contact your local CCG go to: [www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Clinical-Commissioning-Group/LocationSearch/1](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Clinical-Commissioning-Group/LocationSearch/1)

To contact NHS England email: [england.contactus@nhs.net](mailto:england.contactus@nhs.net)

### **NHS Complaints Independent Advocacy Service**

Since April 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, individual local authorities have a statutory duty to commission independent advocacy services to provide support for people making, or thinking of making, a complaint about their NHS care or treatment. Arrangements will vary between local authority areas. Contact your local PALS or complaints manager, or local authority for information about how this service is provided in your area.

### **Patient Advisory and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Representatives from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) are available in all hospitals. They offer confidential advice, support and information on health-related matters to patients, their families and their carers.

To find your local PALS go to [www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/patient-advice-and-liaison-services-\(pals\)/LocationSearch/363](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/patient-advice-and-liaison-services-(pals)/LocationSearch/363)

### **Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman**

If you remain unhappy or do not receive the resolution you wish for you can refer the matter to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, who is independent of the NHS and Government. Call 0345 015 4033 or for more information visit [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)

### **NHS Choices**

For further more in depth information regarding NHS complaints visit: [www.nhs.uk/choiceintheNHS/Rightsandpledges/complaints/Pages/NHScomplaints.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/choiceintheNHS/Rightsandpledges/complaints/Pages/NHScomplaints.aspx)

## Education

I have appealed for my children to have a place at the school of my choice but it has failed. I don't feel the appeals process has been handled fairly, how do I complain? If you feel that you've been treated unfairly, or that you've been given the wrong information and would like to make a formal complaint, contact the Local Government Ombudsman via <https://www.gov.uk/appeal-school-admission-decision>.

## Employment

I feel I have been discriminated to at work for being an Army spouse - what can I do? Contact AFF's ETAM Specialist at [etam@aff.org.uk](mailto:etam@aff.org.uk) to register the complaint and also contact ACAS for advice. ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) aims to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations.

You could contact the Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS) who can provide information about discrimination and your rights.

It may be worth speaking to your Trade Union representative or Citizens Advice for further information.

I have been asking at my Job Centre about getting Job Seekers Allowance and am getting nowhere?

If a spouse feels they haven't been listened to or understood properly at a Job Centre e.g. problems getting JSA, they should go through their local Armed Forces Champion via AFF's Employment, Training, Allowances and Money specialist at [etam@aff.org.uk](mailto:etam@aff.org.uk).

## Armed Forces Covenant

I don't feel that the commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant are being met?

The MOD Armed Forces Covenant Team can be contacted directly via e-mail at [covenant-mailbox@mod.uk](mailto:covenant-mailbox@mod.uk) if you feel the commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant are not being met in a particular matter or if you feel you are being disadvantaged in matters.

## Serving soldier

I am a soldier and have a complaint about my service in the Army. Is there anyone other than the Commanding Officer I can complain to?

You can complain to the Service Complaints Commissioner, who is an independent point of contact for Armed Forces personnel and any complaints or issues they have. For more information, see [armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk/howtocomplain.htm](http://armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk/howtocomplain.htm)

## Top Tips

Here are some top tips on how to complain constructively:

1. **Complain as soon as there's a problem** - Once you have a problem, get in touch with the organisation or company as soon as possible. Make sure you are following the organisation's complaints procedure - don't waste time complaining to the wrong person or section of the company.
2. **Be calm and clear** - Many organisations ask that you first make your complaint via the phone. Explain your situation calmly and clearly and ensure you give them just the relevant information. Make sure you get your facts right and that you stick to them. Changing your story during a complaint will not help your case. You can explain how the situation is affecting you but the person on the other end of the

phone is more interested in the facts than emotional comments, so stay calm and try to work with them.

3. **Ask to speak to a manager if necessary** - If you feel that the person you are dealing with doesn't understand your issues or isn't being helpful, try not to get angry but ask to speak to a manager or someone more senior.
4. **Use the word 'complaint'** - If you are unhappy with the service you have been offered and want action taken, ensure that you use the word complaint as otherwise the company may not record it as such, meaning they won't take any further action.
5. **Remember that your comments may be recorded** - If you make a complaint via Facebook or email, remember that while these may feel like an informal way of chatting about the issues, these are permanent records of your comments, so be aware of your language and tone. Also remember that any phone calls may be recorded.
6. **What action do you want** - Whether complaining via the phone or in writing, think about what action you want from the company. Do you just want them to acknowledge that they let you down or do you want something to happen? Do you want compensation? Make sure you say clearly what it is you are looking for following the complaint being registered.
7. **Ask for a complaint timeline** - Ask for a clear timeline of how the complaint will be dealt with. This way you don't need to keep calling to chase if they state that they have ten working days to reply. Be patient - it may take some time for them to investigate your complaint and gather all the relevant information - but also ensure they meet any timing guidelines they have.
8. **Keep a timeline and details of your actions** - Keep a note of times and dates of phone calls and any names, so you can refer back to them if needed and they can be used as evidence. Ask if they can issue you with a complaint reference number so that you can track your complaint. There are websites such as [www.tiki-toki.com/](http://www.tiki-toki.com/) which allow you to put together a clear timetable of your complaint for your reference or to send to others.
9. **Take photos** - Photos are a good source of evidence, especially for problems with damage with housing or products. Make sure they are dated. You can use sharing websites such as [photobucket.com](http://photobucket.com) to save your photos to send on to others or a site such as [www.splidhq.com](http://www.splidhq.com) allows you to store photos that cannot be altered by another party.
10. **Work with others in the same boat** - If you are not the only one experiencing problems or issues, it is important that you all log the problem and complain to ensure that the organisation realise this is a wider problem. Contact AFF as we speak to lots of families and this enables us to spot trends.
11. **Give them a chance** - Remember that the only way for things to get better is for people to let the organisations know something has gone wrong. However, we are all human and make mistakes, so give them a chance to put it right!

### How do I write a letter of complaint?

- If possible, write on a computer and print off but if not, ensure anything handwritten is easy to read and neat
- Ensure you include all essential information, such as account numbers, and ensure that you give up to date contact information for them to get hold of you

- Keep the letter brief and to the point and clearly state the problem and what you want done about it
- Include copies of any evidence, e.g. relevant documents or dates/times of relevant visits/phone calls. If you are emailing information always request a read receipt and if you are sending by post always send it recorded delivery - never send originals
- If the complaint is particularly complicated, consider asking for advice on writing it, such as from Citizens Advice or your Unit Welfare Office