

# Factsheet

## Compliments, comments and complaints



### Compliments, comments and complaints about Children's Services

We take all compliments, comments and complaints about our services very seriously. By listening to children and young people and their parents/carers, and learning from their experiences, we can find out what people really think about the services we provide. We want to hear your views, so we can work together to improve services.

#### Compliments

You may want to compliment a member of staff or a part of the service that you have found helpful. We will record your compliment and make sure that the people or services you have told us about are made aware of how you feel.

#### Comments

You may want to comment on how we could do things better. We will record your comment and make sure that it is passed to the relevant manager.

#### Complaints

We want to resolve complaints as quickly and informally as possible. If you are able to talk to your social worker, independent reviewing officer or the manager who delivers your service this is often the quickest and best way to get a problem solved.

However, if you feel you need to submit a formal complaint this may be because you feel we could have given you a better service. You can complain if:

- You are unhappy with a decision;
- You think a service you received wasn't right or good enough;
- You have had to wait for a decision;
- You are unhappy with how much and how often you have received a service or any changes made to that service;
- You think our staff have not behaved or treated you in the way you would have liked;
- You have been refused a service that you feel you should have received;
- You are unhappy with our assessment, care management and review processes;
- Our policies have affected you.

This is not an exhaustive list and a complaints officer can advise further. Where there is an existing appeals process in place (for example, school place admission, home to school transport, statements of special educational needs) these issues can't be looked at through the complaints procedure but we can direct you to more information about these processes.

Please note that if it has been over 12 months since the subject of the complaint came to your attention and you then tell us about it, the council may not consider your complaint. This is in accordance with recommendations made by the Local Government Ombudsman.

Complaints about schools and school staff must be made to the school directly using their own complaints procedure. Please speak to the head teacher or school office for more information in the first instance.

### **Who can make a compliment, comment or complaint?**

- any child or young person (or a parent of theirs or someone who has parental responsibility for them) who is being looked after by the local authority or is not looked after by them but is in need;
- any local authority foster carer (including those caring for children placed through independent fostering agencies);
- children leaving care;
- Special Guardians or someone who has applied to be assessed as a Special Guardian;
- a child or young person (or their parent) to whom a Special Guardian order is in force;
- any child or young person who may be adopted, their parents and guardians;
- persons wishing to adopt a child;
- any other person whom arrangements for the provision of adoption services extend;
- adopted persons, their parents, natural parents and former guardians; and
- any other person who the local authority consider has sufficient interest in the child or young person's welfare to warrant their representations being considered by them.

### **Getting help**

Some people may need help to make their views known. We can offer support for people whose first language is not English, or with a specific communication need such as Braille, large print or audio format.

You are welcome to have a friend or supporter speak on your behalf or be with you at every stage of your complaint. If you are a young person and want help to make a complaint, NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) can help and support you. This is an independent and confidential service. Call 0808 808 1001 or email [help@nyas.net](mailto:help@nyas.net)

### **How to get in touch...**

- Call the complaints officer on **03000 265 762**
- Write to us at **Complaints Officer, Children and Young Peoples Services, Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UJ**
- Email us at **CYPSComplaints@durham.gov.uk**
- Use any of the above contact details to arrange to speak to us in person

### **Queries or concerns about the complaints processes**

The complaints officer is your 'link' to the Children's Services within the council and will help you to have your say. Their role is to be impartial, independent and to ensure that your complaint is dealt with promptly and responded to appropriately. If you have any queries about making a complaint or our processes in general then please get in touch using any of the methods above.

### **You will need to provide us with...**

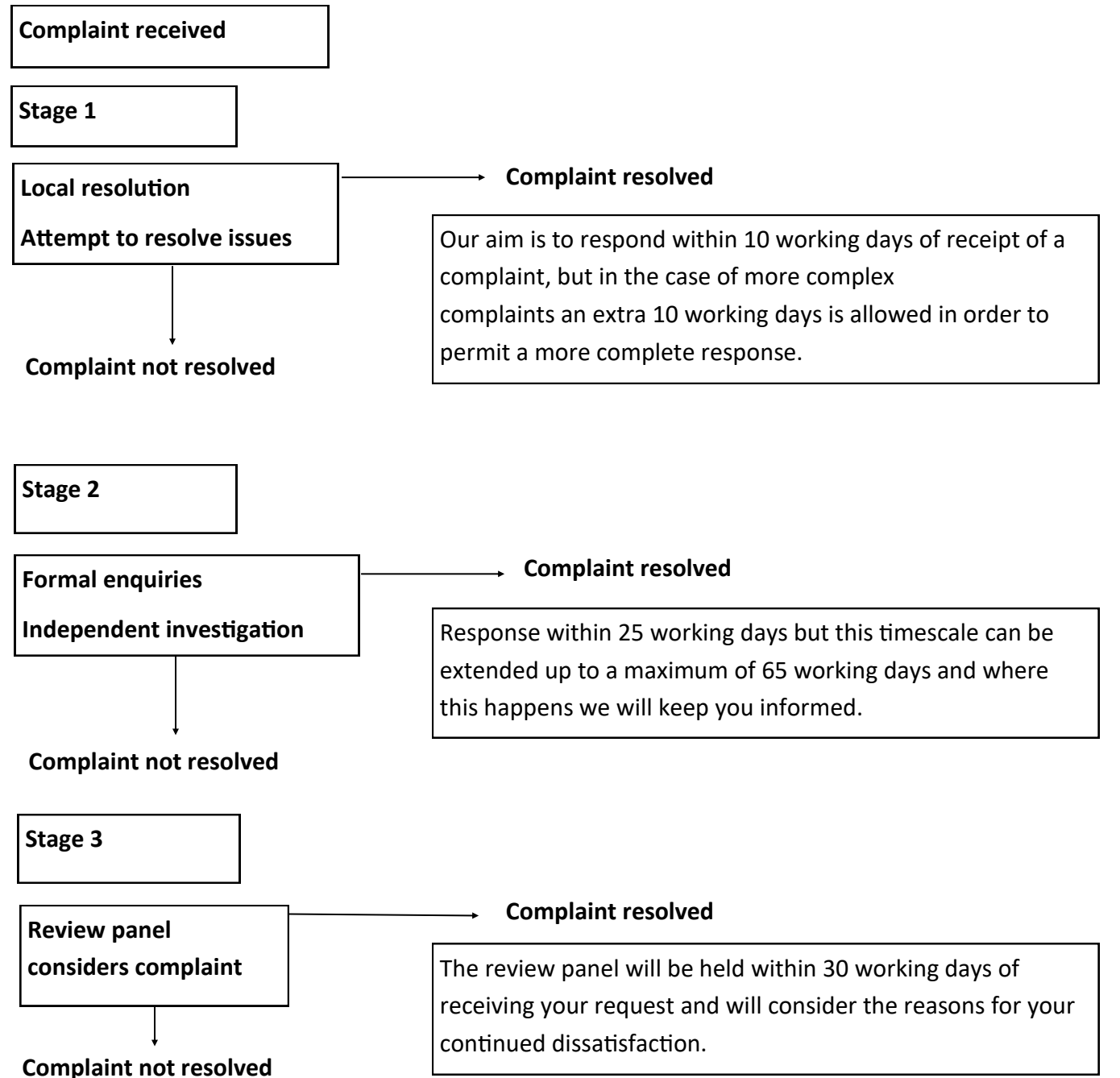
- Your name and address;
- A contact telephone number;
- An email address if you have one;
- The name, address, date of birth of the child/young person if you are making a complaint on their behalf, and your relationship to them.
- An explanation of what you are unhappy about – your **complaint detail**;
- What you would like to see happen as a result of your complaint – your **desired outcomes**.

## Learning from compliments, comments and complaints

We are committed to improving our services to children, young people and their families as a result of your comments. We want to hear about the areas of our service that you value and understand why. Your ideas about how we can improve our services are welcomed.

### Children's Services Complaints

Complaints about children's social care services are sometimes referred to as 'statutory complaints' because the Local Authority is duty bound to consider complaints that qualify under **The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006**. Where this does not apply then complaints about Children's Services are considered under the council's corporate complaints procedures. In relation to children's social care services the Local Authority has responsibility for 3 stages of this complaints procedure as follows:



### Local Government Ombudsman

If you remain dissatisfied you have the right to refer your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is there to consider complaints about council services and you can approach them at any time during your complaint.

Complaints about Children's Services that do not relate to statutory functions are dealt with under the council's corporate complaints procedure. A corporate complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the council's services that requires a response and is not covered by one of our other feedback mechanisms.

We will try to contact you within 24 hours to discuss your complaint and agree a timescale for a response. If you are unhappy with the response you can contact the complaints officer to ask for an independent investigation. This will be carried out by the Corporate Complaints Unit. If they feel there would be no value to a further investigation they may advise you to go to the Local Government Ombudsman.

**Local Government Ombudsman**

PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

Tel: 03000 610 614

Text 'call back' to 07624 811 595 and someone from the LGO will ring you back

Website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

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Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.