

Making a compliment, comment or complaint about Children's Social Care



Children, Young People and Learning

The aim of Children's Social Care is to provide help needed for children and their families.

Compliments

We hope that your experience of our service has been a good one, and it really helps us when you tell us this. If you want to compliment staff you can let us know. What you say will be passed on to staff through their manager.

Suggestions/comments

You may want to make suggestions about how the service could be improved, and we want to hear about these as well.

However, there may be occasions when you are unhappy with what we are doing for your family, or you feel that you are being denied the help that you need.

Your right to complain

When this happens, you have the right to complain. The LASS Complaint (England) Regulation 2006 require that the Local Authority must set up a simple-to-use complaints procedure, which can be used by anyone who is dissatisfied with the actions of the department.

This leaflet explains how we will try to sort out any disagreements and difficulties and what you should do if you decide to make a complaint.

Stage 1:

Resolution stage

Firstly, it is important for you to try and tell the people working with you or your family if you are unhappy with what is happening. This could include talking to the Social Worker or a member of staff. We will then try and sort out things with you. We can try to explain, put things right, apologise if appropriate and learn from what you tell us. We will try to do this within 10 working days.

You should make your complaint as soon as possible as there may be a 12 month time limit on making a complaint.

What if I can't tell the people who are working with me?

The Complaints Manager is available to ensure that you are listened to and will try to help you by talking things over with everyone concerned, or in confidence with you if you wish.

What if I am not satisfied with the answers at Stage 1?

If you are not satisfied, you have the right to ask for a formal complaint investigation at stage 2 either in writing or verbally. If you make the complaint verbally, it will be written down by a member of staff and you can check to make sure that it is accurate.

Stage 2:

Formal complaint investigation

How do I qualify for a formal complaint investigation under the statutory procedures?

You qualify if you are making a complaint about a service which directly relates to a child or young person.

The child or young person may be asked whether they agree that a complaint should be made.

If your complaint is about the impact the service has had on you personally, then you may not qualify for a formal complaint investigation under the statutory procedures.

What will happen next?

If you qualify to access the statutory complaints procedure, an Investigator is appointed. Generally this Investigator is not a member of staff from Children's Social Care. It is the responsibility of the Investigator to make sure that your complaint is fully and fairly explored.

Can I get any support to make my complaint?

Yes, you can include any person you feel can offer you support. If the complaint is being made by a child or young person, we can put them in touch with someone who works separately from Children's Social Care.

How will the complaint be investigated?

The Investigator will want to meet with everyone involved, including you and the child or young person. He or she will also read any Children's Social Care records about the events described in the complaint.

What happens when the investigation is finished?

When the investigation is completed, the investigator writes a report which is sent to the Chief Officer, Children's Social Care.

The Chief Officer, Children's Social Care will then write to you, letting you know if your complaint has been upheld and what action Children's Social Care will take.

All of this should happen within 25 working days of your formal complaint being received. If it is felt that the investigation will take longer than 25 working days, it will be discussed with you and a new time limit set with your agreement. This should not be longer than 65 working days.

What if I am not satisfied with the complaint outcome?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you have the right to take your complaint to a Review Panel Hearing. You have 20 working days to let the Complaints Manager know if you want to do this.

At the Hearing, your complaint will be reviewed by three people who are independent of Children's Social Care.

The panel must meet within 20 working days of your request for it to take place.

What happens at the Review Panel Hearing?

You will be asked to attend the Hearing, or make a statement in writing if you wish. When you attend, you will be asked to tell the panel about the complaint and why you are not satisfied with the department's response.

You can bring someone with you to offer you support or to represent you if you wish (the only exception to this is that it should not be a solicitor acting in an official capacity).

The Chief Officer, Children's Social Care, who replied to your complaint will also attend the Hearing.

What happens after the Review Panel Hearing?

The Panel will record its conclusions, recommendations and the reasons for them within 5 working days. The report will then be given to you, the Director of Education, Children's Services & Libraries and any other people who attended the Hearing.

The Director of Social Care and Learning will decide on the actions to be taken in the light of the Panel's recommendations and will write to tell you these within 15 working days.

Hopefully, by this stage, you will feel that your complaint has been fairly and fully investigated and you will be satisfied with the outcome.

Complaints made by Parents or Carers

The statutory procedure is primarily for complaints on behalf of children and young people. If the complaint is about the service you have received as a parent or carer, which has not had an impact on the children, then this complaint will be dealt with under the Local Authority procedure. The Complaints Manager will be able to provide further information regarding this.

If you are still unhappy

You can take your concerns to:

The Local Government Ombudsman

PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

A free booklet entitled "Complaint about the Council? How to Complain to the Local Government Ombudsman" is available by calling the number above or through the Complaints Manager.

Where to find help

Complaints Manager

Children, Young People & Learning

Bracknell Forest Council

Time Square

Market Street

Bracknell

Berkshire

RG12 1JD

Tel: 01344 351737 (Direct Line)

Email: childrens.servicescomplaints@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

You can also get help from:

- Your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau (C.A.B.) can be contacted on 0844 499 4107.
- Your local councillor will support you to make a complaint.
- There are also various national organisations that may be able to offer help. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau or the Complaints Manager will have details of these.

Copies of this document may be obtained in large print, easy read, Braille, on audio tape or in other languages. To obtain a copy in an alternative format, please telephone 01344 352000.