

Statutory complaints procedure

The statutory complaints procedure can be thought of as four stages; the informal stage, understanding the complaint, planning a resolution and the resolution/feedback loop.

Informal stage

Many people prefer to try and resolve their disputes without resorting to a formal process. You may want to speak directly with your social worker, or ask to speak to the manager of the team.

It is always positive if issues can be resolved without recourse to a formal complaint, however, it is important to remember that if you are still dissatisfied you have the right to complain formally.

Understanding the complaint

When we hear about a complaint we will often first take a quick look at the service user's files, and possibly have a quick chat with the relevant staff, so that we know what has been going on in the case. Then we always prefer to talk to the complainant. We want to get a really good understanding of what the issues being raised are and how you would most like them addressed. This stage is crucial so that we can put our efforts into resolving your actual issues, rather than acting on our assumptions of what you want or where you think the problems lie.

Planning a resolution

Having listened to the issues as you see them and heard what you would like done about it, we will try and agree with you a suitable plan of action and the timeframe to stick to. In the new complaints process the action to resolve each complaint, and the time this should take, is decided on a case-by-case basis. Though the timeframe is arrived at through discussion with you, the relevant manager or member of staff also has a say in the matter; neither the manager nor the complainant can dictate completely unrealistic terms and expect the other party to accept this.

Sometimes it may be that an investigation into the complaint and an official letter from the manager of the service is the best way to resolve the situation, but at other times a phone call, or a meeting arranged between the complainant and relevant staff, may be more appropriate. It will be up to us at the complaints team to balance the needs and desires of both parties and come up with a plan that is acceptable to both.

The resolution and feedback loop

Once a resolution plan is agreed it will be carried out within the agreed timescales. After this we will get back to you to confirm that the issues raised have been fully looked into and that you are happy to consider the matter resolved. Usually this will be the case, however, if you are still not satisfied, or raise further issues that can be dealt with under the complaints process, another resolution plan and timeframe may need to be drawn up and acted upon. This resolution and feedback loop carries on until either you are fully satisfied or the complaints team decide that an appropriate and proportional response has already been given.

If it is decided that an appropriate and proportional response has already been given we will not look into the complaint any further. However, this is a very serious decision to take, and will require to be signed off by John Jackson, the Director for Social and Community Services.

Once this decision has been taken you can still choose to take your complaint forward by bringing it to the [Local Government Ombudsman](#).