

Appendix 1

Stages of the 3 Complaint Procedures

Adult Social Care

The Adult Social Care process comprises of one overall stage in order to comply with legislative requirements:

Stage 1 : Local Resolution, in Adult Care the philosophy of the procedure is flexibility in responding to issues. Engagement with the complainants is crucial, and working with them to resolve issues forms part of this process. Generally, in applying this philosophy the vast majority of complaints can be responded to and resolved at the first time of asking, with only a small number that need to be escalated to the Head of Locality or the Head of Adult Care for further consideration and response.

External contractors providing services on the Council's behalf are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible in this way, with oversight and professional challenge of responses to the contractors made by the Complaints Team.

If the Council cannot resolve the matters in this way then complainants have recourse to the LG&SCO.

Childrens' Social Care

The statutory complaints procedure has three stages:

Stage 1: This is the most important stage of the complaints procedure, and the one at which service areas / external contractors providing services on our behalf are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible.

Stage 2: This stage is implemented when the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings from Stage 1. Stage 2 of the statutory complaints procedure involves an investigation being conducted by an Investigating Officer, with oversight being provided by an Independent Person. Both of these people are external and independent, and an internal senior manager adjudicates on their findings and recommendations.

For non-statutory Childrens complaints, under the Corporate Complaints Policy, an internal senior manager reinvestigates the complaint, taking into account the response already provided. Arrangements might be made for an independent person to review and investigate the complaint instead, if this is considered necessary.

Stage 3: There is no Stage 3 under the Corporate Complaints Policy. The third stage of the statutory complaints procedure, however, is consideration by a Review Panel made up of three independent people. It is not within the Panel's remit to reinvestigate complaints, but to review the stage 1 and Stage 2 investigations and make recommendations as to their appropriateness.

The Panel makes recommendations to the Director of Children's Services, who then sets out what action will be taken in response.

The complainant has recourse to the Ombudsman if they remain unhappy.

Non Statutory Corporate Complaints

There are two stages to the Corporate Complaints Procedure. The two stages are:

Stage 1: Local Resolution, like both statutory processes, this is where the Council attempt to resolve as many issues as possible, using engagement with the complainant as the key to understanding the issues and to agree resolution where possible.

Stage 2: Independent Review, A complainant can request a review of their complaint at Stage 2 of the complaints process if they are dissatisfied with their Stage 1 response. Customers are asked to give the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the outcome to their complaint. Once this is received, the request is passed to the Complaints Manager and Service Manager who will meet and decide whether a Stage 2 response will give the customer clarity in relation to the outcome they are seeking. A Senior Manager who has not been previously involved in the complaint will investigate at Stage 2.

If a complainant is still dissatisfied following a Stage 2 independent investigation, it is possible for them to seek redress with the Social Care & Local Government Ombudsman.

It should be noted that an independent audit of this process was completed in 2021, the review identified there are appropriate arrangements in place for the Corporate Complaints process.