

Complaints about Children's Social Care Services (Statutory Procedure)

Sheffield City Council aims to deliver high quality services. We know though that sometimes things go wrong, and you may not always be satisfied with our services. We value your views on the way we deliver our services, and we are committed to using them to improve our services.

Complaints about Children's Social Care services come under national regulations called the 'Getting The Best From Complaints'. [Microsoft Word - Complaints Guidance.doc \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

However, in some cases the complaint might be looked at under the Council's corporate complaints procedure. This depends on who makes the complaint and what the complaint is about.

How can I make a complaint?

If you are unhappy with children's social care services, a good place to start is contacting the person or team involved. They can often put things right quickly. If you have already done this, or want to discuss your issue with someone else, you can contact us to make a complaint. You can make a complaint by:

- Completing an online form: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/content/sheffield/home/your-city-council/complaints.html>
- Writing to: Customer Services, Sheffield City Council, Howden House, Union Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH
- Telephoning Customer Services: 0114 27 34567

Try to make your complaint as soon as possible after the problem occurs. Try to make your complaint within a year. After a year it can be difficult to find out what went wrong.

What happens when I make a complaint?

We want to solve any problems that you raise with us as quickly as possible. We will usually try to deal with your complaint through local resolution. We will do this when the complaint you've raised can be resolved to your satisfaction within three working days. In this case, there is no need for further investigation.

If it isn't possible to resolve your complaint through local resolution, this will be passed onto a manager in the Children and Families Service. They will investigate and respond to your complaint. The manager may contact you to discuss your complaint and ask you what you would like us to do to put things right.

You should receive a response to your complaint within 20 working days. If we are unable to complete the investigation within 20 working days, we will contact you to explain why. We will also agree a date for a response.



At the end of the investigation, the manager will write to you with their decision. In this letter they will tell you about any actions the Council will take. If you are not satisfied with the response, you can ask for your complaint to be considered at the next stage of the complaint procedure.

Formal (Independent) Investigation

At this stage your complaint will be investigated by an Independent Investigator. The Independent Investigator will be accompanied by a separate Independent Person. This is in accordance with the Children Act complaint regulations.

They will look at all the background information relating to your complaint. They will also interview relevant people involved. They will want to speak to you before they begin their investigation. You can have a relative, friend or an adviser with you at any discussion that takes place.

When they have finished their investigation, the Independent Investigator and Independent Person will write separate reports. These reports are sent to a senior manager in the service. The senior manager may wish to discuss and clarify parts of the report. If so, they will meet with the Independent Investigator, Independent Person and the Council's Complaints Manager to do this.

The senior manager will write to you enclosing a copy of the Independent Investigator's report and confirming their decision. The Independent Person will send their own separate report to you directly.

The investigation should be completed and the response sent to you within 25 working days. However, this may take up to 65 working days if more time is required.

If you are not satisfied with the senior manager's decision you can ask for your complaint to be further considered by a Complaints Review Panel. You have 20 working days from the date of the senior manager's decision to request this.

Alternatively, you may want to consider referring your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. If you wish to do this, you can discuss the process with the Council's Complaints Manager.

Complaint Review Panel

A Complaints Review Panel is made up of 3 independent people. You have the right to attend and speak at the panel meeting. The Panel's role is to review the investigation of your complaint. They will listen to all parties and reach a view on the areas of complaint you are not satisfied with. If appropriate, the Panel will make recommendations around any further action that the Council should take.

The Council is required to hold a panel within 30 working days from receipt of your request. The Panel will produce its written report within 5 working days of the panel meeting. The Director of Children & Families Services will issue their decision within 15 working days of receiving the Panel's report.

At this stage, if you remain dissatisfied, you can take your complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will not normally look into a complaint until the Council has had an opportunity to deal with it. However, you can contact the Ombudsman's Advice Team at any time by:

- Telephoning: 0300 061 0614
- Visiting their website at: <http://www.lgo.org.uk>

I need help with making my complaint

If you need any assistance in making your complaint, please contact us. We can look at what assistance or advice we can provide.

When you make a complaint, you will be treated fairly. You will not be discriminated against either in the investigation of your complaint, or in any service you receive or request.

Consent

If someone else makes a complaint on your behalf, we need **explicit consent** from you before we can deal with this. This is the case even if the person making the complaint is a relative. We require this due to Data Protection regulations. If you do not give your consent, we will not be able to look into the complaint.

Complaints involving other organisations

When we receive a complaint from you that is about another organisation, such as the NHS or care provider, we will contact you and ask if we can pass the complaint on. We need to pass this on so that they can look into and respond to it.

When a complaint is about the Council and another organisation, we will work with the other organisation to investigate this. This will mean that you receive a single joint response. We will let you know which organisation is leading the response to your complaint.