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

Complaints about Children’s Social Care services come under national regulations called the ‘Getting The Best From Complaints’. However, depending on who makes the complaint and what the complaint is about, the complaint might be looked at under the Council’s corporate complaints procedure.

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, because they can often quickly put things right. If you have already done this, or want to discuss your complaint with someone else, you can make a complaint by:

- Completing an online form: www.sheffield.gov.uk/tellus
- 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, and try not to leave it for more than a year as this can make it 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, and there is no need for further investigation.

If it is not possible to resolve your complaint through local resolution, a manager in the Children and Families Service 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. However, if we are unable to complete the investigation within 20 working days, we will contact you to explain why and agree a date for a response.

At the end of the investigation, the manager will put their decision in writing, explaining any action that 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, who in accordance with the Children Act complaint regulations, is accompanied by a separate Independent Person.

They will look at all the background information relating to your complaint and 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 concluded their investigation, the Independent Investigator and Independent Person will write separate reports, which go to a senior manager in the service. The senior manager may wish to meet with the Independent Investigator, Independent Person and the Council's Complaints Manager to discuss and clarify parts of the reports. 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 his/her own separate report to you direct.

The investigation should be completed and the response sent to you within 25 working days or up to 65 working days where 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 and discuss with the Council’s Complaints Manager the possibility of referring your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

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; to 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 they consider 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, and 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 still 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
- or 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 so that 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, even if that person is a relative, then under Data Protection regulations we will require explicit consent from you before the complaint can be dealt with. 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, so that they can look into and respond to your complaint.

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