

# Children's Social Care Complaints & Representations Procedure

January 2014

## Providing feedback about our services

South Gloucestershire Council is committed to providing high quality services and we welcome your feedback about your experience of our services - both good and bad. By listening carefully to your feedback we are able to learn from your experience and shape and improve services for the future. You could make a difference, so we appreciate you speaking up and taking the time to contact us.

Your complaint has been registered with us and is being considered under these procedures. Children's social care services are required by law to have in place procedures to deal with complaints from the children and families who receive those services.

## Who can make a complaint?

Children and young people can make comments and complaints in their own right. They have the right to an Advocate to support them from an organisation called Reconstruct. Their telephone number is 0800 3891 571. You can also make a complaint on behalf of a child if you are their:

- Parent Carer
- Guardian Foster Carer

In some cases, other people may wish to make a complaint on behalf of a young person e.g. other family members. If possible, we will ask the young person for their views and decide whether the complaint is in the best interests of the child. The Complaints & FOI Team can advise you on this.

There are three stages to the children's social care complaints procedure which are explained below.

## **How will my complaint be handled?**

We will try to resolve your concerns quickly, as close to the point of service delivery as possible.

There are three stages to the complaints process and these are explained below.

### **Stage One – local resolution**

The Manager of the service responsible will look into the complaint. They will listen to what you have to say and work with you to find a solution to the problem. You should receive a response to the issues you have raised within 10 working days of the council receiving your response. If we cannot give you a full response in this time we can extend this timescale by a further 10 days.

### **Stage Two - investigation**

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive at stage one you can ask for your complaint to be escalated to the next stage (stage two). You should ask for this to happen within 20 working days of receiving the stage one response. It may be that we can resolve the matter to mutual satisfaction after stage one before going onto stage two. You should contact the Complaints & FOI Team to discuss this further.

This stage involves an independent investigation of your complaint. The investigation will usually be carried out by an external investigator, who, where appropriate will be accompanied by an independent person.

The investigating team will meet with you to better understand the issues and outcomes you are seeking. They will meet with staff, view the records and consider relevant policies, procedures and records and then complete their report. Their report along with their recommendations goes to a Head of Service (Assistant Director level) who provides an adjudication. They send you a copy of the report along with a response (their adjudication).

The Complaints & FOI Team will send you some detailed information about how this stage works.

You should expect to receive a response at this stage within 25 working days but this may extend to 65 workings days. This is because the investigation process at this stage is more formal.

## Stage Three – review panel

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive at stage two you have the right to request a 'review panel'. You should ask for this to happen within 20 working days of receiving the stage one response. It may be that we can resolve the matter to mutual satisfaction after stage two. You should contact the Complaints & FOI Team to discuss this further.

The panel must be held within 30 working days of receiving your request to hold a review panel.

The panel consists of three independent people who will listen to all parties and reach findings on each of the complaints being reviewed. You will be invited to attend the panel meeting. You can bring a friend, relative or Advocate with you if you wish.

The panel send their report along with their recommendations to the Director of Children, Adults & Health department within 5 working days of the date of the panel meeting. A copy of the report is sent to you at the same time.

The Director will consider the panel's report and write to you with their findings within 15 working days of receiving it.

The Complaints & FOI Team will send you some detailed information about how this stage works.

This is the final stage of the children's social care complaints procedure that South Gloucestershire Council follows.

## The Local Government Ombudsman

You have the right to approach the Ombudsman at any time if you are dissatisfied with the process. However, the Ombudsman would usually expect the local authority to consider the complaint first and may refer the complaint back to the council if this hasn't been done.



The Local Government Ombudsman  
PO Box 4771  
Coventry, CV4 0EH



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