



## **Complaints about Children Social Care**

Complaints are most commonly made on behalf of a child or young person by their parent, carer or a representative. However, children and young people can make comments and complaints in their own right.

Many concerns can be resolved quickly with goodwill by making early contact with the member of staff that is working with you or your child/ren, this gives staff the opportunity to resolve matters informally. If this is not possible, local authorities have a statutory duty to have a complaints procedure for children's social care services which involves three stages:

**Stage one** – Local Resolution. Parents, children or young people should start by contacting the Customer Care Manager either verbally, electronically or in writing. The Customer Care Manager will acknowledge your complaint in writing usually within three working days of receipt and a response should be made within 10 working days of receipt, however if it is not possible to give a full response in this time it is possible to extend this timescale by 10 days.

**Stage two** – Investigation. Complaints may be escalated to stage two if stage one has not resolved the matter. This should be requested within 20 working days of receiving the stage one response. This stage involves an independent investigation, usually by an external investigating officer who will meet with the parent, young person or child to better understand the issues and expected outcomes. They will write a report with their recommendations to the Head of Service who will adjudicate the case. A response at this stage should be made within 25 working days but this may extend to 65 working days. This is because the investigation process at this stage is more formal.

**Stage three** – Review Panel. Anyone who is not satisfied with the stage two response has the right to request a 'review panel' which if agreed must be held within 30 working days of receiving the request. The panel must send their report along with their recommendations to the local authority within 5 working days who then have 15 days to respond.

If you are still not happy you can:

**Complain to the Local Government Ombudsman** - The local authority should be given the opportunity to resolve the matter first and there must not be any legal action in process in relation to the complaint. However, the Ombudsman will consider a complaint without the completion of the full complaints procedure if the matter is urgent, there has been unreasonable delay or there has been a complete breakdown of trust.

A complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman must be made within 12 months of the date of the incident or matter being raised as the subject of complaint. The 12 month time limit may be extended with good reason providing it is still possible to efficiently investigate the complaint.

The Ombudsman can only investigate complaints resulting in maladministration that has resulted in injustice (e.g. discrimination, unnecessary delay, failure to abide by fair

procedure). In addition, the Ombudsman may not investigate a complaint if they consider that there is an alternative remedy, such as a legal challenge by way of judicial review.

Because complaints can be dealt with in a variety of ways, there is an estimated timescale of three months to a year for a complaint resolution, depending on the complexity of the case.

### **Useful Contact information**

#### **Customer Care Manager:**

Dorothy Roberts

#### **Address:**

People Directorate,  
Rutland House (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)  
Halton Borough Council  
Freepost WIP4  
Widnes  
WA8 7BR

**Telephone:** 0151 511 8624  
**Text:** 0777 576 5489  
**Email:** Dorothy.roberts@halton.gov.uk

Local Government Ombudsman

#### **Address:**

PO Box 4771  
Coventry  
CV4 0EH  
Phone: 0845 602 1983 or 0300 061 0614  
Web: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)