

## Complaints

### What if you want to make a complaint?

- You should try and sort out your problem first by raising your complaint with your social worker, a member of staff at your children's home or your foster carer.
- Most complaints get resolved without having to make a big fuss. However, if these discussions do not lead to changes that you would like to see, then you can ask to make a formal complaint.
- Every Social Care department must have a leaflet setting out in writing the details of their complaints procedure or you could contact the solicitor who represented you in the care proceedings or any other childcare solicitor or look at the further contacts page.

### What sort of complaint does the Local Authority procedure cover?

- You may be unhappy from time to time about the way Social Care are looking after you.
- Your objection could be about a big decision, for example moving you from one foster home to another, or about something smaller but equally important such as the staff at your children's home refusing to allow you to attend a youth club because the time clashes with the time fixed for the evening meal.
- You might be unhappy about the fact that your social worker is never available when you need to speak to them.
- All of these are the kind of complaints covered by the procedure.

### What does the procedure involve?

- Each Social Care has their own procedure and so each will be slightly different.
- Usually there will be a form to fill in asking for information about who you are, the name of your social worker, and what you are complaining about.
- There is usually a special address the form needs to be sent to.

### What if your complaint is about your Care Plan?

- If there is a problem about your Care Plan ( eg, it is not being followed) you should make sure that your complaint is raised at your review to the chairperson.
- This person is called an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). If the IRO feels that your complain is serious enough they can refer your case to the Office of the Children's Guardian (CAFCASS).
- The IRO is allocated to your case when you first come into care so it is always useful to know their name.
- If you need help with this you should contact either the solicitor who represented you in the care proceedings, any other solicitor on the Children's Panel or contact one of the organisations on the [Further Contacts](#) page.

### **Can you make the complaint on your own?**

- Yes, you can but it is best to get someone to support you.
- Hopefully, the Social Care complaints procedure will be easy to follow.
- If you are not sure, or find it confusing, you can speak to your solicitor who will help you fill out the forms.

### **If a complaint is made will anyone else be involved?**

- The law says that there should be an independent person i.e. someone who is not employed by Social Care to investigate whether your complaint is justified.
- The independent person will work with a senior manager from Social Care. They will look at your file, speak to you and your social worker and anyone else who has been involved and decide whether your complaint is justified. They will usually prepare a written report and you are entitled to see it.
- They should arrange a meeting with you to tell you what they have decided and what they think is best to do about your complaint.
- What you say is very important. If you have someone helping you, they can make sure the people investigating your complaint know exactly how you feel.

### **How long will it take?**

- Investigating a complaint can sometimes take quite a long time.
- The law says Social Care should do this quickly but occasionally it can take months instead of weeks.
- The leaflet setting out the complaints procedure in your particular area should say how long it would take.
- You should try and remember the date you sent in your form, so that you can work out when you are likely to hear the result of your complaint.
- It usually takes about eight weeks to investigate a complaint properly, although sometimes it will be quicker and sometimes it will take longer.
- The Complaints Officer in Social Care should keep in touch with you and let you know what is happening.

### **Can you have someone speak for you?**

- Social Care have to provide you with someone who can speak for you (an advocate) who is independent from Social Care.
- This is usually someone from one of the agencies in the further contacts section, such as the [National Youth Advocacy Service](#) (NYAS).