This document explains how you can provide feedback about Children’s Services provided by Cambridgeshire County Council. This includes feedback about Early Help, Statutory Assessment Team, Special Educational Needs Disability Services and Children’s Social Care. Your feedback may be a comment, enquiry, compliment or complaint. This procedure does not include feedback for Adult Services, nor does it include other Cambridgeshire directorates, such as Learning.

Cambridgeshire County Council is committed to learning from customer experience to ensure we deliver the best possible service. Your feedback enables us to know what we do well and what we can improve upon.

If you are entitled to or have received a service from us, then you (or your representative) have the right to provide feedback about such services or about agencies who provide services on our behalf. All feedback will be listened to, considered and recorded. Learning obtained will be shared with senior managers and our staff group with a view to making changes where appropriate.

We will give help and advice to anyone wishing to provide feedback. Please let us know if you have a disability, if you have difficulty communicating in English, or if you have other needs of which we should be aware. We will then make arrangements to support you as best as possible.

Please note that all complainants are entitled to request a 3-stage formal complaint process, although we would hope to resolve complaints at an early point wherever possible. This document describes the difference between the corporate and statutory complaint processes, with Early Help complaints following the corporate procedure and Social Care complaints in the main, following the statutory procedure.

If you have any queries about this document, or wish to provide feedback, please contact the Customer Care Team. Their contact details are on the next page.
Customer Care Team

The Children’s Customer Care Team comprises a full time Customer Care Manager and a full time Customer Care Officer, based at Shire Hall. They coordinate and report upon this process.

The contact details for the Team are as follows:

Customer Care Manager – 01223 699664
Customer Care Officer – 01223 714765

Shared email address: childrens.servicesfeedback@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Postal Address: Children’s Customer Care Team
SH1215
Shire Hall
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

Reports

The Customer Care Team produces an annual report that is available to the public via Cambridgeshire County Council’s website.

Alternatively, you can request a copy to be posted to you by the Customer Care Team.

Leaflets and Publications

The Customer Care Team produces information for the public as themes arise from complaints and other feedback with a view to clarifying the Council’s roles and responsibilities for the benefit of both the public and the staff. To date, these have included leaflets on:

- Communication
- Private law – where relationships have broken down between parents
- Child Protection – from investigation through to Conference and the ending of Child Protection Plans
- Looked After Children and Care Proceedings
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REPRESENTATIONS

Representations may not always be complaints; they might also be positive remarks or ideas that require a response from the Local Authority. Enquiries, questions or comments about the availability, delivery or nature of a service which are not criticisms are likely to constitute representations, for example when children and young people wish to put forward ideas or proposals about the service they receive or the establishment they live in, without having this framed as a complaint.

In such instances it is usually best to raise these directly with the service that is working with you and your family, as you are likely to receive a faster response. However, if you are unsure about who to speak to or feel your query is not receiving an answer, you are welcome to contact the Customer Care Team, however, as we are not involved in case work we will not automatically know all the details of your situation so please be patient as we will need to gather specific information to know who best to direct your contact toward.

Where someone makes the same enquiry repeatedly, it may be more appropriate for the issues raised to be dealt with through our complaints procedure, which is described later in this document. If this seems to be the best course of action, the Customer Care Manager will let you know.

It is also important to know what has gone well, so do please tell us. This is not just something to celebrate but is also a source for learning. You can either send your compliment directly to the service or to the Customer Care Team.

All compliments are forwarded to and logged by the Customer Care Team, which reports upon these in its regular reports, including alongside the annual report which is made available to the public.

Sometimes we hear from a Member of Parliament (MP) or Councillor on your behalf. These enquiries are usually sent to the Chief Executive of the County Council or the Executive Director for People and Communities. Replies are sent back to the MP or Councillor, who may or may not decide to share them with you. In the event that you are unhappy with the response given to/by your MP or Councillor, you can choose to make a complaint at Stage 1 of our complaints process.

We deal with these enquiries in the same timescales as correspondence directly from complainants (i.e. 10 working days, or 20 working days if the matter is complex.)

Access to Records

Sometimes, members of the public wish to access their own or their children’s records. You can do this using the following on-line form:


If you do not have access to a computer, please let us know and we will send you the relevant form in the post.
ALL COMPLAINTS

We accept that there may be occasions when you are dissatisfied or disagree with something that has occurred and we would encourage you to discuss it as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff. It may be that there has been a misunderstanding or that a process has not been fully explained to you. If we are unable to resolve the issue to your satisfaction or if you wish to make a complaint, please let us know as soon as possible.

You can make your complaint in whatever way is most convenient for you. It does not have to be in writing, however there is an online form on the County Council website:

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/complain

People sometimes chose to write letters or emails or phone in with complaints or raise them in person. You can also use the Feedback Leaflet which contains a simple form and freepost address. This should have been given to you when we first started to work with you, but it can be provided again on request.

If you wish to make a complaint in person, you can do so with any member of staff, who will then pass it on to the Customer Care Team.

The key information that we need is your name and contact details, name(s) of the child/ren involved and the nature of your complaint, ideally together with what you would like to happen as a result of raising your complaint.

Advocacy

We understand that people often find it stressful to make a complaint and may welcome assistance with this. You can always choose to have informal support from a relative or friend but if you believe an advocate would help, we will try to put you in touch with an appropriate service. Currently all Children and Young People who are designated Looked After Children (LAC) or children subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) who wish to make a complaint about Children’s Social Care are put in touch with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), who will provide them with independent and confidential support through the process if they choose.

Complaints that involve other bodies

Wherever possible, complaints against the Local Authority will be dealt with through one investigation and response, including complaints that span Adults and Children’s Services, or those that involve Children’s Services and other agencies, such as Health. However, decisions will be made as to the timeliness of any such joint response and the complainant will be informed if more than one response will be sent.

Complaints that entirely concern other agencies must be dealt with by those agencies and where they relate to independent providers, their own complaint procedure must be followed. For example, complaints relating to Child Minders, Playgroups and Nurseries should be addressed to Ofsted.
Complaints made on behalf of or about a child or young person

Where a complaint is received from a representative acting on behalf of a child or young person, the Customer Care Team will seek to confirm where possible that the child or young person is happy for this to happen and that the complaint submitted reflects their views.

The Customer Care Team is also likely to receive complaints by adults that relate to a child or young person but are not made on the child's behalf. The Children’s Act 1989 gives discretion to the Local Authority to decide whether or not the complainant is suitable to act in this capacity or has sufficient interest in the child’s welfare. If the Customer Care Manager considers that you do not have sufficient interest, she will notify you in writing, explaining that no further action will be taken. The Customer Care Manager may discuss this decision with relevant operational managers in order to make this decision.

Data Protection

You will understand that great care is needed with regard to Data Protection, especially where complainants do not have Parental Responsibility for the children about whose services they are complaining. We cannot share information to which you are not entitled, without explicit, signed consent of the person whose information it is.

For example, sometimes complaints are from extended family members. In these situations, the Customer Care Team will ask whether or not at least one parent with Parental Responsibility (PR) or the child or young person concerned is aware of your complaint. If so, we may contact that parent/child/young person to seek permission to communicate in detail directly with you. Where this permission is not given, only very brief information can be shared with you. Another option is to write a full response but to send it to either the person with PR or the child/young person, who then has the choice as to whether to share it with you.

Additionally we may receive a complaint from a parent who does not have PR. We would again need to seek permission before replying in detail directly to you.

Deferring, freezing or suspending complaints

It may not be possible to accept a complaint about a matter which could prejudice a ‘concurrent investigation’ within any of the following situations: Court proceedings, Tribunals, Disciplinary proceedings or Criminal proceedings. Once the concurrent investigation has concluded, you may resubmit your complaint for consideration, however, the complaints process outlined in this guidance is not an appeals procedure against Court, Tribunal, Disciplinary or Police decisions, therefore complaints should not be used as an additional means to try and achieve a desired outcome.

Complaints which have been accepted can also be suspended in some situations, for example if the case is going before a Court or if a Child Protection investigation is taking place. If your complaint is about a proposed change to a Care Plan, a Placement or a Service, this decision may need to be deferred until your complaint has been considered. However, care will be taken if deferring a decision is likely to have a significant effect upon the mental or physical wellbeing of a child or young person.
Complaints outside of remit

Complaints are not usually accepted in relation to events which occurred more than 12 months prior unless you were unaware of those events until recently. (Complaints from children and young people may be accepted outside the 12 month period, where they were not able to make the complaint or did not feel confident in bringing it forward within the 12 month timeframe).

Complaints cannot be accepted if they have been previously raised and responded to more than 12 months earlier or have already been dealt with at all three stages of the complaints procedure. Nor will we accept or escalate a complaint that has been previously upheld in its entirety, and where further consideration will not result in the outcome you are seeking.

Particular aspects of a Child Protection Conference – how the conference was run, the decision of the conference of whether to make the child the subject of a Child Protection Plan, or the decision of a Review Conference to continue the Child Protection Plan – are outside of our complaints procedure remit. However, it may be possible to raise such issues with the Child Protection Conference Chairperson, their line manager or directly with the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB).

Claims for significant compensation

The complaints procedure is not a way to obtain financial compensation per se. If you seek only compensation as the result of your complaint, you should take legal advice about making a claim against Cambridgeshire County Council. The Council can, however consider complaints where its actions (or lack of actions) have resulted in you incurring unnecessary expenses or suffering financial loss or hardship.

Disciplinary Procedures

Please note that the complaint procedure, whether corporate or statutory, is completely separate from any disciplinary procedure and as such, details of which are kept strictly confidential. Complainants are not informed of any such action, although we accept that sometimes complainants may wish for members of staff to be disciplined.

Persistent Complainants

The County Council has a persistent complainant’s policy. A meeting is usually offered as it is also important to distinguish between people who make a number of complaints because they really think things have gone wrong, and people who make unreasonably persistent complaints. If you are persisting with your complaint because you feel the issues raised have not been considered in full then the Customer Care Manager will consider any outstanding issues. If it is found the Local Authority has already done so and has demonstrated this to you, then the Customer Care Manager will consider whether you have met the criteria as inappropriately persistent.
In all cases, any new correspondence will be read and considered as there may be new matters which require investigation and response. Our objective, wherever possible, is to complete consideration of the complaint on its merits in a managed way.

A “persistent complainant” may present as a person who makes the same complaint repeatedly (with minor differences) but never accepts the outcomes; a person who seeks an unrealistic outcome and persists until it is reached; or a person with a history of making other unreasonably persistent complaints.

Where the Customer Care Manager decides to treat you as an *unreasonably* persistent complainant, they will write to you to tell you why they believe your behaviour falls into this category, and what action they are taking and the duration of that action.

An unreasonably persistent complaint is likely to include some or all of the following:

- A historic and irreversible decision or incident;
- Frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with the Local Authority staff;
- Behaviour toward Local Authority staff in an aggressive manner or being verbally abusive or threatening;
- Changing aspects of your complaint partway through the investigation or Review Panel;
- Making and breaking contact with the Local Authority on an ongoing basis; and
- Persistently approaching the Local Authority through different routes about the same issue in the hope of getting different responses.

The sort of restrictions imposed could include:

- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and limited times;
- Limiting contacts to one form only (for example, a maximum of one letter or email a week);
- Requiring contact to take place with one named staff member;
- Requiring you to enter into an agreement about your future behaviour before your case proceeds; and/or
- Managing contact with the help of an independent advocate.

If you continue to behave unreasonably, or override the restrictions placed on access to our service, we may decide to terminate contact with you and end any investigation into your complaint.

New complaints from people whose behaviour has previously been deemed unreasonable will be treated on their own merit. Restrictions imposed in respect of an earlier complaint will not automatically apply to a new matter.

In extreme cases, the Customer Care Manager may consider the following actions:

- Referring your case to the Local Government Ombudsman before the complaints procedure has been exhausted; or
- Advising you that they cannot assist further, informing you of your right to approach the Local Government Ombudsman.
Terminating contact

Where your behaviour continues in a way which is unacceptable, the Customer Care Manager may decide to terminate contact with you and discontinue any investigation into your complaint.

Where your behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, the Customer Care Manager can consider other options, such as reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action. In such cases, the Customer Care Manager may not give you prior warning of that action.

In following this guidance, the Customer Care Manager should refer to the Mental Capacity Act and all relevant human rights based legislation.

THREE-STAGE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Complaints against Children’s Social Care are subject to Statutory Regulations¹ and Guidance² and involve external scrutiny at Stages 2 and 3. All other complaints are dealt with under the Local Authority’s corporate complaint procedure, with all 3 Stages being internal. See below for more information.

STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS – Local Resolution Statutory and Corporate

The Customer Care Team is central to the management of all Children’s Services complaints.

Complaints Process – See Appendix 1

On receiving your complaint, the Customer Care Team will send you an acknowledgement letter, explaining:

- Whether your complaint is being dealt with under the statutory or corporate complaint procedure;
- Which manager will be investigating and responding to you;
- The due date for the complaint response to be sent to you.

The Customer Care Manager will raise any urgent issues about practice as soon as these become apparent.

¹ The Local Authority Social Services Act (1970) and the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England), Regulations 2006, set out the rules by which we manage feedback.
Timescales:

- An acknowledgement letter will be sent within 3 working days of receipt of your complaint;
- The response will usually be sent on or before 10 working days of receipt of your complaint (the date of receipt and/or it is deemed you have sufficient interest is counted as day zero);
- A holding letter will be sent if there is going to be a delay, with a maximum of 20 working days for the response letter to be sent (in complex cases, 20 days may be given from the outset)

Please note: Sometimes the Responding Manager will contact you to discuss your complaint and he or she may invite you to a meeting, especially where you have raised a number of issues or if the situation is particularly complicated. The Manager will have 10 working days from the date of the meeting in which to send you a written response to your complaint.

You will be sent a feedback form with the response letter and we ask you to return this to us if you have any further comments to make, including whether there are any unresolved issues. If we do not hear from you within 20 working days, your complaint will be closed.

Key tasks for the Customer Care Manager:

- Managing, developing, resourcing and administering the complaints procedure;
- Overseeing the receipt and investigation of complaints that arise from problems that could not be resolved initially;
- Appointing Investigating Officers, Review Panellists and Independent Persons;
- Monitoring and reporting on time scales;
- Maintaining a written record of complaints made, the procedure followed and the outcome, whether or not the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- Making recommendations to the Local Authority on any action to take following an investigation, also taking the learning from the complaint for reports and staff briefings.

The Responding Manager:

- Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of your complaint;
- Identifies solutions and recommends action to resolve problems, ensuring any action required is implemented;
- Places a record on the child’s file which includes the complaint and the final response.

Dissatisfaction with outcome of Stage 1

We will always try to find a satisfactory resolution to any issues that continue to cause you concern. Depending on what these issues are, we may arrange a face-to-face meeting with
you. You are welcome to bring a supporter with you to any meetings. All such meetings will be followed up with a letter covering the main points and any planned actions.

Where the matter is not resolved locally, the complainant has the right to request consideration of their complaint at Stage 2. To do so, you should return the feedback form directly to the Customer Care Team or contact the Team by some other means, sometimes people prefer to ring, email or write to us rather than use the form.

The process for Stages 2 and 3 is different depending on whether the complaint is Corporate (Early Help) or Statutory (Children’s Social Care). In all cases, Stages 2 and 3 are coordinated by the Customer Care Team. The expectation is that the majority of complaints should be considered (and resolved) at Stage 1. However, if on receipt of your request the Customer Care Manager identifies the complaint has either been fully upheld at Stage 1 and/or further consideration of the issues raised would not result in a demonstrably different outcome then she will write to advise you of her decision whilst reminding you of your right to approach the Local Government Ombudsman.

**Stage 2 – Corporate Complaints**

Where your request for consideration at Stage 2 has been accepted, it is passed by the Customer Care Team to a Manager with greater seniority than the responding Manager from Stage 1. Together with the request for Stage 2, the Customer Care Team passes the original complaint and response to the relevant Senior Manager. The Team will write to you within 3 working days to say which Senior Manager is to be involved and to give a due date for a response, 10 working days from agreement to go to Stage 2 (or 20 working days in complex cases).

**Dissatisfaction with outcome of Stage 2 – Corporate Complaints**

As with earlier dissatisfaction, the Customer Care Team, together with the Manager, will attempt to find a resolution that is acceptable to you before going to Stage 3.

**Stage 3 – Corporate Complaints**

If you wish to proceed to Stage 3, you may ask for your case to be reviewed. You can do this by contacting the Customer Care Team, who will notify the Director of Corporate and Customer Service. This Senior Manager undertakes the review of your complaint on behalf of the Chief Executive. The process mirrors that at Stage 2 in that the review and response take place within 10 working days (which may be extended in complex cases). The Customer Care Team is responsible for acknowledging the request within 3 working days, providing relevant paperwork to the Director of Corporate and Customer Services and ensuring the timescale is met, or alerting you if there is to be a delay, as to when you may reasonable expect a response.
This is the final Stage in the Corporate Complaint Process. As with Stage 1, the Customer Care Team keeps a record of all Stage 2 and 3 investigations. The Customer Care Manager determines whether any aspect is upheld and notes the relevant learning for inclusion in future reports and staff briefing sessions.

Stage 2 – Statutory Complaints – Children’s Social Care

Please note that the Customer Care Manager has discretion to pass complaints directly to Stage 2. This is rare but sometimes takes place where the situation is particularly complex.

This Stage involves the appointment of two independent people to investigate the complaint. The Customer Care Team has a number of such people who have a range of relevant backgrounds. They have all been Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked and are taken on for single pieces of work for which they are paid an hourly rate. There is a lead Investigating Officer (IO) and a second Independent Person (IP). The latter ensures that the investigation is thorough, transparent and fair with clear and logical outcomes. The IP has the additional responsibility of keeping the child’s best interests in mind.

With your written permission (and with the knowledge of any other person with Parental Responsibility and where appropriate the child or young person), the independent people meet you to draw up a Schedule of Complaint to clarify the areas of complaint which are unresolved, and to establish your desired outcomes. The Stage 2 timescale will start from the date that the Schedule of Complaint is finalised and signed. The investigators should have access to all relevant records and staff, other than Court paperwork, for which Court permission would be required. These should be released within the bounds of normal confidentiality and with regard to relevant legislation in the Freedom of Information Act, 2000 and the Data Protection Act, 1998. They will then arrange to read the relevant files and interview staff, including any who have left the Local Authority (providing they are contactable). The Schedule of Complaint is sent in advance to all those who will be interviewed so they can prepare for the interview meeting. They are assisted by Business Support in accessing the records and are permitted to take away copies of relevant documents.

The Investigating Officer writes the main report, including findings, conclusions, outcomes and recommendations, and the Independent Person writes a shorter supplementary report commenting on if the investigation has been concluded in an impartial, comprehensive and effective manner.

Both reports are forwarded to the Assistant Service Director to be considered in their role as Adjudicating Officer. The Adjudicating Officer will prepare a response to the reports, and in doing so they may wish to meet with you or the child/young person. The reports and ‘letter of adjudication’ are sent to you and also to the relevant Senior Managers who will share it with appropriate members of staff.
The timescales associated with Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints process are:

We seek feedback within 20 working days from receiving the Stage 1 response to request consideration at Stage 2.

1. Once the Schedule of Complaint is signed, the investigation should be completed and the response sent within 25 working days (up to a maximum of 65 working days if the case is complex)

Dissatisfaction with outcome of Stage 2 – Statutory Complaints

As with all expressions of dissatisfaction, the Customer Care Team, together with the Manager, will attempt to find a resolution to any ongoing dissatisfaction prior to offering Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Statutory Complaints – Children’s Social Care

Where Stage 2 of the complaints procedure has been concluded and you remain dissatisfied, you will be eligible to request further consideration of your complaint by a Review Panel. However unlike Stages 1 and 2, Stage 3 of the Statutory Complaint Procedure is not another investigation therefore it is not possible to consider a complaint that has not yet been fully considered at Stage 2. It is a review conducted by 3 independent people, not previously involved with the complaint, who decide if the complaint has been properly investigated and whether there should have been different or additional findings and recommendations.

The Panel takes place following the sharing of written information between all those who attend on the day. This comprises:

- Any explanation from you about the issues that continue to be unresolved and what you want as an outcome
- The original complaint and response
- The Stage 2 request, Schedule of Complaint, Stage 2 reports and ‘letter of adjudication’

These documents are circulated no less than 10 working days in advance of the Panel meeting.

Those attending the meeting include:

- The complainant(s) and a supporter (if wanted)
- The Assistant Service Director
- A relevant Senior Manager
- The Investigating Officer from Stage 2
- The Independent Person from Stage 2
- The Customer Care Manager
- A note taker – there are no minutes – notes are for the Panel only
- The 3 Panel Members
No party should feel the need to be represented by lawyers at the Review Panel. The purpose of the Panel is to consider the complaint and wherever possible, work towards a resolution. It is not a quasi-judicial process and the presence of lawyers can work against the spirit of openness and problem-solving. However, you have the right to bring a representative to speak on your behalf should you choose to.

The open Panel Meeting with all the people outlined earlier attending, tends to take place over 2-3 hours, after which the Panel Members meet in closed session, with the Customer Care Manager and note taker present to provide advice but not to participate in the decision-making. This closed session takes place on the same day, after which the Panel Chair draws up the Panel findings in consultation with the other Panel Members and forwards this to the Customer Care Manager. The findings, including Panel recommendations, are sent at the same time to the Service Director, and also to those who attended the Panel Meeting including the complainant.

The Local Authority must send its response following the Panel’s recommendations to you (and other participants as necessary) within 15 days of receiving the Panel’s report. The response should be developed by the Director of Children’s Services setting out how the Local Authority will respond to the recommendations and what action will be taken. If the Director deviates from the Panel’s recommendations he should demonstrate his reasoning in the response.

The timescales associated with Stage 3 of the Statutory Complaints process are:

1. You have 20 working days to request a Stage 3 Panel from receiving the Stage 2 reports and ‘letter of adjudication’ or within 20 working days of any resolution meeting;
2. The Customer Care Team should appoint the Panel within 10 working days and hold the Panel within 30 working days of receipt of request for Stage 3;
3. The Panel Chair must produce the Panel findings within 5 working days of the Panel hearing;
4. The Service Director must write to you within 15 working days of receipt of the Panel findings.

This is the final Stage in the Statutory Complaint Process. As with Stage 1, the Customer Care Team keeps a record of all Stage 2 and 3 investigations. The Customer Care Manager determines whether any aspect is upheld and notes the relevant learning for inclusion in future reports and staff briefing sessions.

Next Steps - All Complaints - The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The LGO can be approached by complainants at any point during the complaint process but you will usually be re-directed to the Local Authority for it to complete all 3 Stages of its complaint procedure.

The LGO looks to see if there has been maladministration and it makes recommendations to the Local Authority where it feels this has been the case.
Appendix 1 - Flow chart for all complaints

Corporate & Statutory Stage 1

Service User has a complaint

Children’s Services Staff

NYAS Advocate

Customer Care Team

Relevant line manager investigates

Response sent to complainant

Satisfaction

Dissatisfaction

20 working days

Dissatisfaction

Attempt at resolution
Possibly a meeting with the line manager and CCM

Satisfaction

Stage 2
Corporate Stage 2

Next senior line manager investigates

Response sent to complainant

Dissatisfaction  
Satisfaction

Statutory Stage 2

CCM appoints IO and IP

IO & IP meet with complainant & draft SOC

Complainant signs SOC

IO & IP review files and meet with staff

IO & IP draft Reports on their findings

Letter of Adjudication by Assistant Director

Letter & Reports sent to HoS & District Manager

Findings shared with staff

Satisfaction

Letter & Reports sent to complainant

Dissatisfaction

25/65 working days

20 working days

Attempt at resolution
Possibly a meeting with the relevant manager and CCM

Stage 3
Corporate Stage 3

Director of Corporate & Customer Services investigates on behalf of Chief Executive

Response sent to complainant

Dissatisfaction  Satisfaction

Statutory Stage 3

CCM appoints Panel Chair and 2 Panel Members

Panel date/location arranged with all attendees: complainant, IO, IP, Panel Members, Panel Chair, HoS, Service Director, CCM, and note-taker

Stage 3 Panel documents sent to all attendees

Complainant to submit supplementary material, sent to all attendees 10 working days prior to the Panel

Stage 3 Panel, Panel meets & makes recommendations

Panel Chair sends Findings to CCM

Recommendations & Findings sent to all attendees

Recommendations & Findings sent to Service Director for response

Service Director Response sent to complainant

Dissatisfaction  Satisfaction

Local Government Ombudsman
Appendix 2 - Counting Complaints

This Appendix aims to explain how complaints are counted and how outcomes are decided.

It is rare that complaints contain only one issue and it is often the case that the issues are not very clear, making it difficult to count them separately or to compare them easily with other complaints. Nevertheless themes and learning are taken very seriously.

The following gives examples from Children’s Social Care but the principles apply equally to Corporate Complaints.

At Stage 1, a complaint is counted as one, even if it contains more than one issue. For example, a parent may ring to say that she is dissatisfied with how a Social Worker spoke to her on a first visit; factual inaccuracies in a report, and the late arrival of minutes of a meeting. Each of these will be investigated and a single response will be sent. If the same parent rings again while the complaint investigation is ongoing, to say that the Social Worker also failed to show his ID card, this will be added to the same complaint. Once the complaint has been investigated and a response sent, any new complaint will be counted separately.

In the above example, there may be no witness to the visit and it may not be possible to ‘determine’ whether or not the Social Worker showed his ID card, or if he was rude. Where it is one person’s word against another’s, the outcome of those aspects is that they ‘cannot be determined’ either way. If, having checked available information, there is evidence to support the content of the report; the complaint that the report contains factual inaccuracies will not be ‘upheld’. Finally, if the minutes were late, i.e. more than 10 working days after the event, that aspect will be ‘upheld’.

Overall, this complaint would be deemed to be ‘partially upheld’ as one aspect was upheld. Even where more aspects are ‘not upheld’ than are ‘upheld’, the complaint will still be deemed to be ‘partially upheld’.

The Customer Care Manager, who has no line management involvement with the cases that are complained about, makes the final decision as to whether or not a complaint is upheld.

At Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaint Procedure (concerning Children’s Social Care), the two Independent Investigators meet with the complainant to go through which aspects of the original complaint continue to cause concern. These are usually the aspects which were ‘not determined’ or ‘not upheld’ at Stage 1. The Investigators draw up a ‘Schedule of Complaint’ with the complainant, which the complainant signs only when she is happy that this is an accurate reflection of her views. This can contain a list of issues. Each of these is investigated and a finding (of ‘upheld’, ‘partially upheld’, ‘not upheld’ or ‘cannot be determined’) is reached against each one.

The complainant receives copies of both Investigation Reports in full, together with a letter from the Assistant Service Director. There is no County Council involvement in the making or altering of the Stage 2 outcomes.
Each Stage 2 investigation is counted as one investigation and is not counted as a number of separate complaints. Similarly, each Stage 3 Panel is counted as one. The number of Stage 2 investigations and Stage 3 Panels is reported upon within in-house and public reports.

At Stage 3 of the Statutory Procedure, the complainant notifies the Independent Panel in advance of the Panel Meeting as to which complaints continue to be unresolved and these are discussed. While a Stage 3 Panel is not a new investigation, the Panel will nevertheless comment on whether it agrees with previous findings or not. The Panel findings are sent to the complainant at the same time as they are sent to the Service Director. The Service Director also writes directly to the complainant.
Appendix 3 – Contact Details

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Customer Care Team – Children’s Services

FREEPOST Box SH1215
Shire Hall
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

Telephone: 01223 699 664 or 01223 714 765 or 03450 455 203
Email: Childrens.ServicesFeedback@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Text: 07795 092 404
Website: http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Information Governance Team

OCT1224
Cambridgeshire County Council
Shire Hall
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

Telephone: 01223 699 137

THE NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE (NYAS)

Unit AA The Anderson Centre
Ermine Business Park
Spitfire Close
Huntingdon
PE29 6XY

Telephone: 0808 808 1001 (Freephone from landlines. Calls from mobiles may be charged.)
Email: help@nyas.net
Text: 07434 967 405
Website: www.nyas.net

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Telephone: 03000 610 614 (Calls to 03 numbers cost no more than calls to national geographic numbers starting 01 or 02.)
Text: ‘call back’ to 07624 811 595
Fax: 02476 820 001
Website: www.lgo.org.uk
OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 03001 231 231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Text: 60085
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

HEALTH & CARE PROFESSIONS COUNCIL (HCPC)
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU

Telephone: 0800 328 4218 (Freephone in the UK, contact the Fitness to Practice Department)
Email: ftp@hcpc-uk.org
Website: www.HCPC-UK.org.uk

THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER’S OFFICE

Telephone: 0303 123 1113
Email: casework@ico.org.uk
Website: http://ico.org.uk