



How to make a complaint about Children and Young People's Services

1. Who can complain?

The person who makes the complaint must either be the person receiving the services or a person complaining on behalf of the person receiving the services. This can include children and young people, their parents, carers or legal guardians or someone who has the permission of the person receiving the services to represent them.

2. Who can help you make a complaint?

Anyone can help you make a complaint. This can be someone you know or someone from a voluntary organisation, such as a mediator or advocate who can help you voice your concerns. You can also ask a translator or a sign language interpreter to accompany you.

3. How to make a complaint

If things do go wrong, we have a complaints procedure you can use to have us look into your complaint and put matters right as quickly as we can. It is important to make your complaint as soon as possible because we may not be able to consider your complaint if it is about something that happened over 12 months ago. Our complaints procedure has three main stages:

- **Informal complaints**

We will always try to resolve enquiries/concerns by way of 'service requests' by talking through problems with you, without the need to go through our formal complaints procedure. We will aim to put things right and give you a timescale when we will respond to you, detailing the action we have taken.

If we are unable to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction then we will tell you how to proceed within the formal complaint procedure which is outlined below.

- **Stage 1:** Sorting matters out at the team level.

A complaint will be registered under Stage 1 of our formal complaints procedure when:

- we can't resolve the problem informally
- you tell us that you want to make a formal complaint
- we believe it is necessary to use the formal procedure to resolve or respond to the complaint

We will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days of receipt and tell you who is looking into it. We will aim to respond to your complaint within 10 working days of receipt. However, this can be extended by a maximum of 10 working days for more complex complaints.

- **Stage 2:** Independent Investigation.

If a complainant considers the issues unresolved, the Council will consider commissioning an investigation by two independent people who will aim to provide a report with their findings within 25 working days of the statement of complaint having been agreed. If the investigation cannot be concluded within 25 working days, it can be extended by a further 40 working days.

- **Stage 3:** Independent Panel Review Hearing.

If a complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, within 20 working days of receiving the decision, he or she can ask for a review panel to further consider their concerns. The panel shall meet within 30 working days of receiving the complainant's request and any recommendations from the Review Hearing are made to the Council within 5 working days of the hearing. Within 15 working days of receiving the recommendations, the Council will write to the complainant and advise him or her what action it will take as a result.

In certain circumstances, the Complaint Manager may discuss with a complainant the possibility of an early referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman where further consideration at Stages 2 or 3 may not produce a demonstrably different outcome.

4. Ways to make your complaint

Complaints can be made quickly and easily 24 hours a day, seven days a week via our website at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/get-in-touch. You can also view and check the status of complaints via our MyAccount service. Visit www.hillingdon.gov.uk/myaccount to register. If you need an adjustment to be made please call the complaint team. It is somewhat difficult to investigate a complaint submitted anonymously but where we have sufficient information to allow an investigation to begin, we will do so. Where possible, we will also respect a complainant's reasonable request for anonymity.

5. After you have made your complaint

If a complainant is not happy with the final response from the Council, they can then ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to further investigate the complaint. The Ombudsman is responsible for conducting investigations of complaints about service failure and maladministration that cannot be resolved by the Council. Any complaint should be in writing and addressed to the LGO at P O Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH. They can also be contacted by telephone on 0300 061 0614.

This policy was revised in June 2023