

A Layman's Guide to Making an Effective Complaint

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Parent and Carer Alliance



Care Action Protect Empower

Ten Strategies to make your complaint as effective as possible

1. Get help and support from someone not directly involved:
 - a. The Parent and Carer Alliance or similar
 - b. POhWER - for health or mental health
 - c. SENDIASS for special educational needs in schools and the LA
 - d. Family Rights Group for social care
 - e. and/or friend or family member

2. Give time and thought to the preparation of the complaint:

- Consider the timing of a complaint
- Have all the information you need at your fingertips - make use of a Subject Access Request
- Read and understand policies and procedures the agency are working to.

3. Try and resolve your concerns with the people responsible:

- Ask for a meeting
- Send an email
- Write a letter
- Structure your concerns in the way you want them to be presented as a formal complaint.

4. Use the published complaints policy:

- Read and understand the agency's complaints policy
- Get your head around the timescales laid out in the policy
- Be clear in your own mind about what you can expect to happen
- Be prepared to challenge if you don't get the response you expect.

5. Use the correct point of entry:

- Resist the temptation to write to the chief officer

6. Write an introduction that lays down, in summary form, what your complaint amounts to:

- Base this on the email/letter already used previously
- Include details of your child/children
- With older children - ensure they support your complaint
- Explain the nature of your complaint
- Be clear who you are complaining about
- Include time periods your complaint covers
- Keep the summary brief and succinct
- Tell them you would welcome a meeting with the investigating officer

7. In the body of the complaint give as much detail as you need (but no more) to explain the reasons for your complaint

- Include dates, report titles, types of meetings, actions
- Avoid repetition
- Avoid the use of personal feelings or judgements about individuals involved
- Avoid theorising about why things have gone wrong (leave the reasons for the poor practice to the complaint investigator)
- It is better not to including threats of legal action, going to your MP, the press or social media in your complaint submission (this can be done separately).

8. Describe the ways in which poor practice has impacted on you and your family

- Stress, damaged mental wellbeing
- Feelings of being undermined, bullied
- Loss of confidence
- Breakdown in trust
- Delay and lack of service from elsewhere
- Financial hardship
- Risk of family breakdown

9. Finish with a couple of sentences to say what you want from the complaint

- Recognition of poor practice
- The reinstatement of a service
- A new worker
- Recognition of the hardship caused
- Financial compensation
- An apology
- Steps to ensure the same poor practice does not occur again

10. Using the Ombudsman or the Department of Education

- Where complaints are being ignored
- Where there is an unreasonable delay
- Where complaint procedures are not being followed
- Where complaints remain unresolved at the end of the procedure.

A Social Care Complaint

- Under statutory guidance “Getting the Best from Complaints”
- Complaints have to be made by or on behalf of a child
- Complaints have to be about a social care service or a service commissioned on behalf of social care
- A complaint should be made within 12 months of the poor practice incident
- There are three stages to the procedures - stage 2 is an investigation carried out by someone independent of the LA (or at least from the service)
- Time scales are clearly defined.

A LA Corporate Complaint

- Not under statutory guidance but monitored by the LGO
- Includes all complaints not covered by the social care procedures, ie education/housing services, provided by the LA or a service commissioned on behalf of the LA
- A complaint should be made within 12 months of the poor practice incident
- There are two stages to the procedures
- Investigations may not be independent of the service provider
- Time scales are less clearly defined.

A NHS Complaint

- Not under statutory guidance but monitored by the Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman
- Complaints usually investigated by lead professional but can be independent of service
- Usually only one stage to the procedure.

A Complaint about a School or other Education Provider

- Complaint procedures have to be published on provider websites
- Can be three or four stages
- Ends up with the DofE

Complaints about personal data

- Corporate complaint procedure
- Ends up with the Information Commissioner's Office
- ICO have powers or enforcement over the agency.

Any other comments or Questions

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Gloucestershire: Parent and Carer Alliance C.I.C

Private group · 935 members



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