

Norfolk County Council is committed to providing quality services, but we also recognise that sometimes things go wrong, and that you may not always be satisfied with a service we have provided to you, or someone you care for. We always try to listen to our customers, so that we can find ways to improve our standards of customer care.

If you have any concerns, try and resolve them informally by discussing them with your support worker or their manager. Most problems are quickly and successfully resolved this way.

If you would like support or extra advice on matters regarding Children’s Services, you may want to talk to your mediation worker by calling **01379 608977**. They will be happy to work closely with you so that, together, a solution can be found as quickly as possible.

If after these steps, you still feel that we have been unable to provide you with a satisfactory response, or your problem has not been resolved, you can make a formal complaint. If the complaint you are making is:

* On behalf of a child or young person, please see our ‘Have Your Say’ leaflet / ‘Making a complaint about services to children leaflet’
* About deregistration, please follow the appropriate appeal procedure
* About safeguarding, please follow child protection procedures (refer to the carer’s manual)
* About services delivered direct to you by Children’s Services, please follow the Norfolk County Council Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure, outlined overleaf.

How to make a complaint

If we have not got things right first time and you want to make a formal complaint, you can contact us in the following ways:

* **Web** **www.norfolk.gov.uk/complaints**
* **Email** **complimentsandcomplaints@norfolk.gov.uk**
* **Telephone**  **0344 800 8020** (local rate)
* **Text** **07789 920916**
* **Letter** (or by filling in a complaints form) and posting it to:

 **Compliments and Complaints Manager**

 **FREEPOST IH 2076**

 **Norwich NR1 2BR**

* **In person**  at County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DH

Making a complaint if

you are a foster carer

What happens when I make a complaint?

If you make a complaint directly to someone in Children’s Services, they will send your complaint to the Customer Service Compliments and Complaints Team on your behalf. There are three stages to making a formal complaint:

Stage One

When you make your complaint to the Compliments and Complaints Team, please try to give us as much detail as possible, including names, dates, etc. We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and pass your complaint to a manager within the fostering service. They will look into the issues raised and help us to respond to you. We aim to resolve your complaint within 15 working days from the acknowledgement of your complaint.

We may decide that the best way to respond to your complaint is to arrange a meeting with you, but we will always confirm the outcome of the meeting with you in writing. Although we cannot guarantee to meet your expectations, being really clear about the outcome you are looking for will help us to respond more appropriately to your complaint. Most complaints are resolved at this stage, but if this is not the case, please let us know so we can talk about what can happen next.

Stage Two

If we have been unable to resolve your complaint at stage one, or you remain unhappy with the outcome, you can contact the Compliments and Complaints Team to talk about progressing your complaint to stage two.

If we agree it is appropriate to progress your complaint to stage two, an Investigating Officer will be appointed to look at the issues you have raised. This will usually be a senior manager within Children’s Services who has not previously been involved with your case to. Sometimes the investigation may be carried out within the Compliments and Complaints Team or through an external investigator. A full response is generally completed within 25 days from the start of stage two, but can sometimes take longer. We will keep you updated, if this is the case.

Stage Three

If, by now, you still feel that we have not been able to work together to find a satisfactory solution, the complaint moves to stage three where an independent investigation is carried out for the Chief Executive by either a senior officer from a different department, the Compliments and Complaints team or, in some circumstances, an external investigator.

The findings of this investigation will then be shared with you, along with decisions on any recommended actions. This will usually be within 25 working days, but if we need more time because your complaint requires a more complex investigation we will let you know in writing when you can expect a full response.

**Mediation can be offered at any stage within the complaints process as an alternative way to resolve a dispute, and before the complaint is escalated to a higher stage, if it is considered an appropriate way forward to find resolution to your complaint.**

Taking matters further

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) can investigate complaints if you are not satisfied with how we have handled your complaint. You can make your complaint direct to the LGO’s office at any time, but they will usually only look at your complaint once our investigations have been completed.

You can contact the Local Government Ombudsman at **www.lgo.org.uk**

or call **0300 061 0614** or write to: **PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH**

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