

Making a Complaint to the Fostering Service

Current and prospective foster carers can make a complaint about any aspect of the fostering service which affects them directly. The Council has a written complaints policy, and carers and prospective carers should be provided with information on how to access this.

In the first instance, you may want to consider raising any concerns with your supervising social worker or a manager in the Fostering Service. This is often the quickest route to resolving issues.

You can, however, make a formal complaint straight away if you prefer.

If you are helping a child in your care complain or want to complain on their behalf, please see the Complaints by and for Children Guidance.

Tips for Making a Complaint

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman offer the following advice for complainants:

Don't delay

Make your complaint as soon as possible after the event. It is much easier to remember all the details;

If you are unhappy with the reply, you may have the opportunity to take your complaint to a second stage. Again, do this as soon as possible and explain why you are not happy with the first reply.

Check what you need to do and be clear you are making a complaint

Make sure you are complaining to the right person /department. Your supervising social worker should be able to tell you who you need to contact to make a complaint.

Put it in writing

It is helpful to put your complaint in writing if you can. Make sure to write 'complaint' at the top of your letter or email, so there can be no doubt.

Be clear and brief

Cover all the relevant points, but be as brief as you can;

Make it easy to read by using numbered lists and headings to highlight the important issues;

Give your contact telephone and email details, as well as your address. Then, if the person dealing with the complaint needs more information, he or she can contact you and ask.

Provide evidence

Send copies of relevant documents – but only those that will help the complaint officer understand your complaint or provide evidence to support it. Make sure you keep copies yourself - you may want to keep any original documents and send copies of these with your complaint;

Keep notes of any telephone calls about the complaint, including the name of the person you spoke to. This may be important later.

Be clear about what you want

Explain clearly what you hope to achieve by complaining. But be realistic: your request needs to be fair and in line with the problems you have had.

Be polite

Whether writing or speaking to a complaint officer, try to remain polite and calm.

Respond appropriately

Respond appropriately if asked to do so by the complaint officer. Read any letters and documents that are sent to you. If you cannot reply within the stated timescale, tell them why and ask for more time.

Be patient

It may take some time for your complaint to be considered. Don't be afraid to chase politely if nothing seems to be happening to progress matters;

If you are unhappy about a decision made by the service's Decision Maker or a recommendation made by the Fostering Panel you may be able to request a review by the Independent Review Mechanism. See [Reviewing my Approvals and Appeals](#).

You are also entitled to get in touch with the regulatory body Ofsted. A complaint to Ofsted may be appropriate if you are not satisfied with the service's response after you have followed its complaints procedure or if you feel unable to contact the service concerned about this particular issue.

Complaints Process - An Overview

Formal complaints should be made in writing to a manager in the service. The fostering service will always try to deal with this informally. This does not mean that you are not being taken seriously; it is because the complaint is more likely to be able to be dealt with quickly and to your satisfaction when it is dealt with in this way. This is known as a Stage 1 complaint. All complaints are recorded by the fostering service and the fostering service lead monitors them.

If you are not satisfied with this, your complaint will be dealt with in line with the Children's Social Care Procedures. This is known as a Stage 2 complaint and an independent investigation will take place.

If the complaint has still not been resolved then an independent review panel will consider the complaint and the way it has been dealt with. This is Stage 3 of the process.

What if I am still not happy?

Local authority foster carers can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman if they remain unhappy.

Carers registered with either a local authority or Independent Fostering Agency can contact Ofsted if they have continued concerns about the service.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If your complaint is about a local authority fostering service, and you are not happy with the final outcome following the Stage 3 / Independent Review Panel, you can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Ofsted

Ofsted inspect fostering agencies in relation to the National Minimum Standards. If you have a serious concern about the fostering service, you can contact Ofsted, [click here](#) for their contact details. You can contact Ofsted if you are not satisfied with the fostering service's response after you have followed its complaints procedure or you feel unable to contact the service concerned about this particular issue.