

Compliments & Complaints

Children and Young Person's Guide



Introduction

Rochdale Children's Services value your comments and would like to hear from you if you have something to say which is a Compliment or a Complaint. If you have had a good or bad experience, it is important that we know about it and can learn from your experience. Your comments will help us develop the best workforce, services and support systems. We will use your comments to organise our services and plan for the future.

What is a Compliment?

This is when you want to let us know that someone has done something good, you have had a good experience or something positive has happened. All compliments will be recorded.

Rochdale Children's Services would welcome your positive comments, but will also be able to see what is working well and help develop our services to benefit others.

We will write to you to thank you for your compliment and make sure that the individuals involved are informed.

What is a Complaint?

This is when you want to let us know that you haven't had a good experience. This could be about someone or something that has happened to you, or maybe something that hasn't happened. All complaints will be recorded.

There may be things that you are not happy about, which could be sorted out quite easily and quickly or it may be something more serious which will take a bit more time to investigate.

There may be reasons why your complaint can't be dealt with immediately. This would be because it may impact on another investigation for example Court Proceedings or Criminal Proceedings. You will be notified if your complaint can't be dealt with straight away and when you can expect a response.

Whatever your complaint is, Rochdale Children's Services will respond to you as quickly as possible. This Guide will give you more information about how to make a complaint and how it will be dealt with.

What kind of things could I complain about?

There are lots of things you may feel you want to complain about. If it is important to you then Children's Services want to hear about it. Some examples of why you may wish to complain are: -

- A decision made about you, which you don't agree with
- Not receiving the right support, or changes to support you don't agree with
- Being told you are not entitled to receive a service or support
- The support you receive isn't very good or doesn't help you
- You have waited a long time for support or a decision
- How much money you have to pay or are receiving
- How someone has behaved or spoken to you
- You don't agree with something that has been written to you
- You are not being helped to have contact with people who are important to you

- Where you live
- The quality of care you receive

Who can make a Complaint?

You can make a complaint if you are a child or young person who is involved with Children's Services. Children's Services may be involved with you because you are being supported by a Children in Need Plan, Child Protection Plan, Care Plan (which means you are cared for) or you may have been adopted.

Other people can make a complaint on your behalf, for example your parent or someone who has [Parental Responsibility](#) for you, your foster carer, residential worker or advocate. If someone is acting on your behalf, you will be asked whether you agree with what the person has said and are happy that they have made a complaint. It is important that the person is acting on your behalf and has your best interests in mind when complaining. The Complaints Manager will consider this when they receive the complaint and if they do not think that the person is not acting in your best interest, they will receive a letter to tell them that the complaint will not be taken any further.

There may be times when someone complains but you may not know about it. Children's Services will consider the complaint and the person making it and decide whether the person is acting in your best interest. You will be involved in the decision making where possible. Depending on your age and understanding you may or may not be able to give your views. If you need help to contribute, you can be supported with an interpreter or translator. If you are not able to help, a decision will be made with your best interests in mind.

Sometimes Children's Services receive complaints from an anonymous person that is the person does not give their name. Children's Services will make a decision whether any action is needed. Just because the person doesn't give their name doesn't mean that they are not worried for you or have the right to complain.

When should I make a Complaint?

You should make a complaint as soon as possible, because this will help the investigation. If you leave it a long time it may be difficult to find the information or speak to the right people, who may have left the authority. If a complaint is received regarding something that happened over a year ago, it may not be investigated. There may be very good reasons why you weren't able to complain, and this will be considered. You or the person complaining on your behalf will be informed in writing of the decision if your complaint is about something that happened a long time ago.

How can I make a Complaint?

You can make a complaint face to face, by telephone or in writing by email or letter.

What happens next?

Whoever receives your complaint will send a copy or tell the Complaints Officer. The Complaints Officer will record your complaint and keep an eye on what is happening and when you get a response. There are timescales which need to be followed to make sure you get a response quickly. If the complaint indicates that you may be at risk, the concerns will be dealt with immediately under Child Protection procedures.

If the complaint is about a person, they will not be allowed to investigate but will be spoken to, and someone independent will be asked to do this. The complaint will be dealt with sensitively and confidentially.

If the complaint is about another agency or professional, you will be asked whether you agree for the information being shared with the appropriate manager. Other agencies will have their own procedures and will record the complaint and then investigate.

Stages of Complaints

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution

This is where the complaint can be sorted out straight away and you are happy with the outcome. The complaint will be recorded by the Complaints Manager. The person making the complaint will be told that the complaint has been received, who will be investigating and when they will send a response within 10 working days (a working day is Monday to Friday). You will be informed about advocacy services. There may be reasons why the investigator cannot respond in 10 working days, for example because they need to read files or records, or a member of staff is not in work. A letter will be sent to explain the reasons but a response will be sent within 20 working days unless you or the person complaining has agreed for more time.

All complaints will be considered at stage 1 unless Children's Services feel that it is not appropriate, in which case they will go directly to stage 2. If you, or the person making the complaint, are not happy with the response, the letter will explain how to go to Stage 2 and when you would need to do this. You will be helped to do this.

- Stage 2 – Investigation

The Complaints Manager will arrange for someone to undertake the investigation and ask for information or files from anyone who may be able to contribute to the investigation. The person who will investigate the complaint could be employed by Rochdale or may be someone who is independent. Neither of these people will be linked to you or anyone who has been named in the complaint. There will be two people involved in the investigation one of whom must be independent of Rochdale. The independent person monitors what the Investigating Officer is doing.

The Complaint Officer will set out what needs to be considered in the investigation and will also write to you or the person making the complaint, letting them know what is happening, the name of the Investigating Officer and Independent Person and when a response will be sent.

The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will meet with the person making the complaint, to agree what is included in the complaint and find out what they want out of the investigation. They will investigate the complaint by speaking to people involved and reading information. They will write a report about what they have found during their investigation and will make some recommendations about whether they agree with the complaint or not and whether any actions are needed if things have not been done properly. The report will be sent to the Complaints Officer and Independent Person in time to be able to send the response to the person making the complaint within 25 working days of receiving the complaint. If 25 days is not enough time, the Investigating Officer will speak to the Complaint Manager and agree an extension which cannot be longer than 65 working days. The person making the complaint will be informed in writing that there may be a delay, why and if possible get the person who made the complaint to agree to the extension.

The Independent Person will also write a report once they have read the Investigating Officer's report, which will comment on whether they think the investigation was undertaken properly, whether the right people were involved and their comments considered, whether the Investigating Officer's report is accurate and fully addresses all of the issues in the complaint and whether they agree with the recommendations or want to make any of their own.

The Complaints Manager will then speak to a Senior Manager in Children's Services, who will read the reports, decide whether they agree with the recommendations, and whether there are any actions needed. The reports are then sent to the person making a complaint within 65 working days of receiving the complaint and inform the person making the complaint of their right to appeal and move to Stage 3.

- Stage 3 – Review Panel

Where the person making the complaint is not happy with the outcome of Stage 2, they have 20 working days to ask the Complaints Officer for the response to be considered by a Review Panel. The Complaints Officer will send a letter within 2 working days to let the complainant know that they have received their appeal.

The Review Panel will be organised within 30 working days of the appeal being received. The panel will include 3 independent people who are not employed by Rochdale, are not Elected Members for Rochdale or are a partner or wife/husband of either of these groups of people. One person will act as the Chair of the panel.

You or the person who made the original complaint will be notified of the date, time and location of the Panel Meeting at least 10 working days before it is due to take place and invited to attend. You or the person making the complaint can take someone with you to offer support or speak on your behalf. The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will also be invited to attend. The Chair may ask other people to attend.

The panel will receive a copy of all the information relating to the Complaint Investigation no later than 10 working days before the date they are due to meet. This information will also be sent to anyone else asked to attend. The Panel will consider the reports and what everyone has to say and then make recommendations which will be sent to the Assistant Director of Children's Services and to you or the person making the complaint within 5 working days.

The Assistant Director will respond to the recommendations by writing to you or the person making the complaint within 15 working days, explaining what their final decision is and why. If you or the person making the complaint are still not happy, you will be informed of how to appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman.

- Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints about Local Authorities. You or the person making the complaint, do not have to wait till Stage 3 to contact the Local Government Ombudsman but usually they will give the Local Authority the opportunity to investigate the complaint. You must put your request in writing either by letter or on line. The Complaints Manager can help you or the person making the complaint if needed.

The Complaints Officer

The Complaints Officer is responsible for recording all Compliments and Complaints received, co-ordinating and monitoring Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 and offering support. They will also make sure that any recommendations made following an investigation are undertaken.

Children's Services want to learn from all Compliments and Complaints and use them to develop services and plan training for staff.

The Complaints Officer will complete a report every year which will include the number of Compliments and Complaints, what they were about and what was decided after investigation. It is therefore important that every Compliment and Complaint is sent to the Complaint Officer.

The Complaints Officer will review all complaints and where someone is making a lot of complaints they may be considered unreasonable or persistent, which might mean that the person is making complaints which are not appropriate. This decision is taken by a Senior Manager in Children's Services. If it is felt that the person making the complaint is being unreasonable, action will be taken to limit this person's contact with staff.

Contact Details

Rochdale's Complaints Officer

Local Government Ombudsman

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614 (LGO Advice Team)

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Email: advice@lgo.org