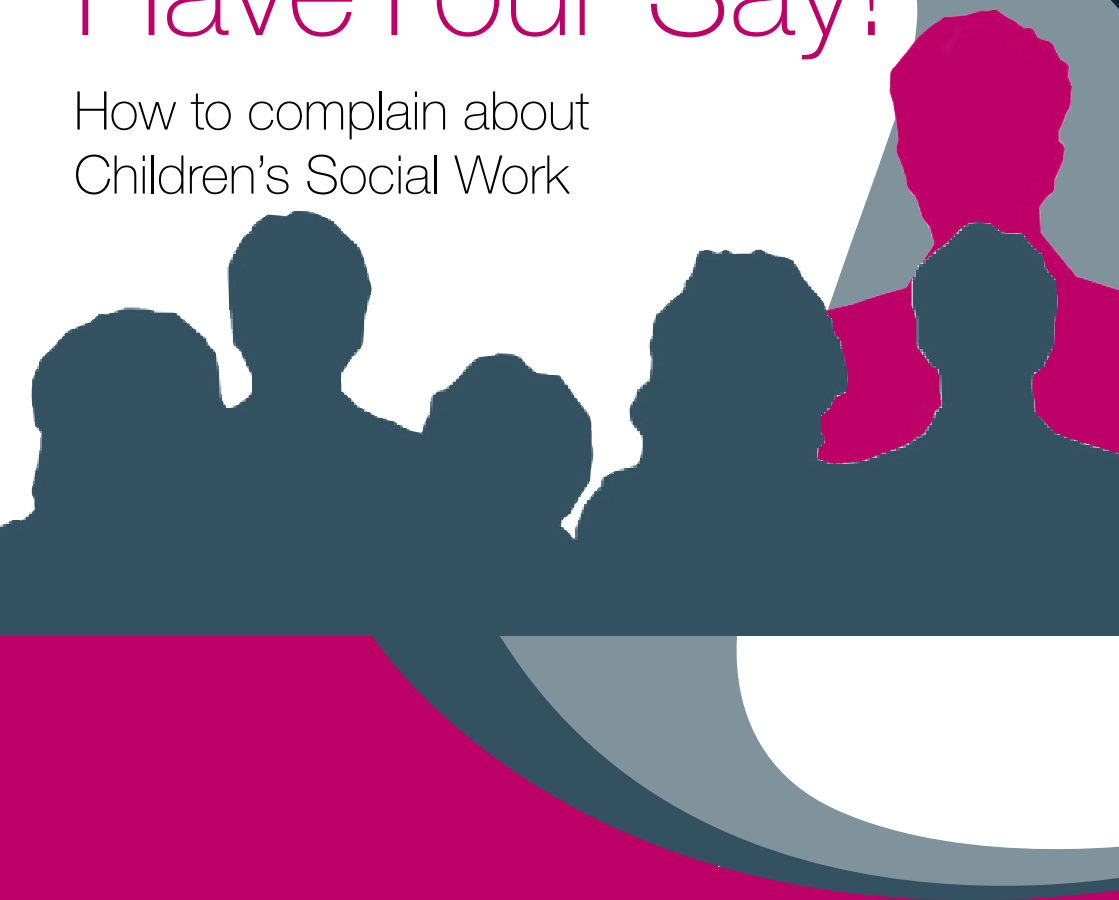


Have Your Say!

How to complain about
Children's Social Work



ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

This policy sets out how Aberdeen City Council's Children's Services will handle complaints and reflects our commitment to provide service users and those acting on their behalf with a transparent, accessible and effective process for dealing with complaints. The Children's Social Work Service is committed to providing complainants with the opportunity to raise concerns and make a complaint about the services it provides. We view complaints positively and are committed to have in place an effective complaints procedure to handle all issues brought to the attention of staff.

We are constantly seeking to improve the standard and quality of our services and recognise that complaints are an opportunity from which we can learn. It is important to us that people feel satisfied with the service provided. We will treat complaints seriously, giving individual attention to every one received.

All complaints will be properly investigated in an open and transparent manner and the outcome of the investigation will be explained to the complainant along with any actions that are taken in light of the complaint. You will not be discriminated against as a result of making a complaint.

Policy Aim

The aim of the policy is to put things right where they have gone wrong and wherever possible use outcomes to inform service improvements. We aim to:

- Ensure that staff and complainants are provided with support and the necessary guidance throughout the complaints process
- Ensure responses are provided to complainants in appropriate timeframes
- Provide clear, simple, easy to understand procedures for managing complaints which are widely publicised and accessible.

Definition of a Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the social work service's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the social work service.

Complaints can be wide ranging but typically will fall into the following general categories:

- Dissatisfaction with the service provided, both quality and quantity
- Dissatisfaction with service refusal

- Dissatisfaction with decision making
- Dissatisfaction with staff conduct
- Dissatisfaction with delays in responding
- Dissatisfaction with assessments both financial and needs
- Dissatisfaction about withdrawal of service.

Our Key Principles are that our process will:

- Be quick and simple
- Be objective and transparent
- Seek early resolution
- Deliver improvement
- Be user focused
- Be accessible.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all staff employed by Aberdeen City Council's Children's Social Work Service.

Who can complain

Anyone who receives, requests, or is affected by our social work services can make a complaint. This is not restricted to 'service users' or those who can act on their behalf, but may also include people who come into contact with or are affected by these services.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

You can make a complaint up to 6 months from when you first knew of the problem. In exceptional circumstances we may accept a complaint after this time limit but no more than 12 months from when you first knew of the issue.

What to do if you want to make a complaint

In the first instance, you should speak to the member of staff working with you. If you do this we can try to sort out your complaint there and then. Very often problems arise through a simple mistake and talking about them can be enough to sort things out. It is particularly important that staff have the opportunity to deal with issues raised first hand.

Frontline Resolution

Frontline resolution aims to quickly resolve straightforward customer complaints that require little or no investigation. Frontline Resolution must be completed within 5 working days. In exceptional circumstances, where there are clear and justifiable reasons for doing so, an extension of up to a further 10 working days is permitted but only if it will make it more likely that the complaint will be resolved at the frontline resolution stage.

If you are unhappy with our response you can escalate your complaint.

Investigation (Stage 2)

A complaint must be escalated to the investigation stage when:

Frontline resolution was tried but you remain dissatisfied and request an investigation into the complaint. This may be immediately on communicating the decision at the frontline stage or could be some time later.

You refuse to take part in the frontline resolution process.

The issues raised are complex and require detailed investigation, or

The complaint relates to serious, high-risk or high-profile issues.

An investigation aims to establish all the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and to give a full, objective and proportionate response that represents our final position.

Your complaint must be acknowledged within 3 working days and we aim to provide a full response within 20 working days from receipt of your request. If more time is needed to investigate your complaint we will contact you to discuss this.

You have the right when complaining to ask for your anonymity to be preserved to all except those staff directly investigating your complaint. If you do so, your wish will be honoured but this may seriously restrict officers from fully investigating your complaint.

What to do if you want to make a complaint for Investigation

- You can contact the Complaints, Rights and Enquiries Team on 01224 523445, 01224 523941, 01224 522054 & 01224 522004
- Complete and return the form attached to this leaflet
- Email CRE_complaints@aberdeencity.gov.uk
- Write us a letter
- Ask a member of staff to help you to make your written complaint
- Have someone complain on your behalf. We will need your written permission to share information about you with them.

Provide the following details:

- Your name, postal address and telephone number
- A brief statement of the circumstances
- What you would like to happen as a result of your complaint
- Whether you are complaining on behalf of someone else (if so, we will usually need that person's written consent advising that they want you to act on their behalf).

What we will do with your complaint for Investigation

- We will let you know that we have received your complaint within 3 working days from receipt
- A member of staff may contact you to make sure we have understood your complaint
- We may let you know how we will try to resolve the issues raised and you may be invited to meet a senior member of staff. You are welcome to bring along someone to support you, although this should not be a legal representative
- Your complaint will be taken seriously and investigated
- You will receive a written response to your complaint as soon as possible but not later than 20 working days from the date of receiving the complaint for investigation.

What to do if you remain dissatisfied

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is an independent body who can review the complaints made to us. If you are unhappy with our response to your Stage 2 complaint, the SPSO can help.

You can contact them for advice and they may investigate the issue to see if we could have done things differently. They may suggest improvements or give us advice on how we could do better.

If you haven't completed both stages of the complaints procedure, the ombudsman may ask you to do this before they get involved.

Recording and Monitoring

All complaints received by the Complaints, Rights and Enquiries Team will be recorded. We will publish statistics quarterly on outcomes, trends and action taken.

Complaints involving more than one Public Body or Organisation

If a complaint involves more than one agency, the agencies involved will work together and agreement will be reached regarding which agency will take the lead. Complainants will be informed of which agency will take the lead.

Authorisation and Review

The policy will be reviewed annually and will include changes and improvements arising from operational reviews and/or legislation.

Legislation

This policy is informed by the following legislation:

- Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002
- Social Work Scotland Act 1968
- NHS and Community Care Act 1990
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1998

Other people who can help you

Addresses are on the back page.

You may feel that you want to talk to someone else to help with your complaint. There are a number of people you can approach who will advise you.

These include:

Your Local Councillor

You can find out the names of your local Councillor in your local library, or on the Council website www.aberdeency.gov.uk or by contacting the Members Support Section, Town House, Broad Street, Aberdeen, AB10 1FY (01224 522178). All Councillors hold surgeries where members of the public can discuss matters with them. Surgeries are advertised in local newspapers, libraries and community centres.

Your Governmental Representatives

You can speak to your MP or MSP at his or her surgery. You can also write to your MP at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA or your MSP at The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.

The Care Inspectorate

If you receive a service which is regulated by The Care Inspectorate, in the first instance you should take your complaint to your service provider. If you are not happy with the response or do not wish to do so, you can take your complaint to The Care Inspectorate. Your complaint will then be dealt with under their Complaints Procedure.

Local Advice Centres

Professional staff at local advice centres offer free and unbiased advice on a wide range of subjects.

Contact details for Advocacy Service Aberdeen and Citizens Advice Bureau can be found on the back page.

For your own use

Date you sent your complaint

Date you received an acknowledgement

Date you received an official reply

Thank you for taking the time to tell us how you feel about our services in Aberdeen.

Complaint Form

Please use this form to register your complaint about our services.

Please write clearly and with dark ink, as the form will be photocopied.

Personal Details (We need this information so that we can reply to you)

Full Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Have we already heard from you?

If you have already spoken to someone about your complaint, please tell us who this person was and when you spoke to them.

Name of staff member:

Date when you spoke to them:

What would you like us to do?

If you have a complaint, please tell us what reasonable steps we could take which would satisfy you

Please sign and date this form as a correct record of your complaint.

Signature:

Date:



Your Complaint

Please tell us in as much detail as possible about your complaint.
Use extra sheets of paper if necessary.

What you should do now

Send the completed form to the
Complaints, Rights and Enquiries Team, Aberdeen City Council, Business Hub 8, 1st Floor
North, Marischal College, Broad Street, Aberdeen AB10 1AB;
or give it to a member of staff to return on your behalf.



This document is available in various formats and languages.
Please call 01224 522581



www.aberdeency.gov.uk

If you want this document translated into another language or format (including Braille, large print, audio disk or BSL DVD) please contact us via email or telephone number listed below.

Jeżeli ten dokument jest wymagany w innej wersji językowej lub formacie (w dużym druku lub na dyskietce audio) proszę się skontaktować z

إذا كنت تود الحصول على هذه الوثيقة مترجمة إلى لغة أخرى أو بشكل آخر (مثلا بالخط العريض أو القرص السمعي) فالرجاء الإتصال:

Если Вы хотите получить этот документ, переведенным на другой язык или в другом формате (крупным шрифтом или на звуковом диске), пожалуйста, свяжитесь по

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Dacă doriți ca acest document să fie tradus într-o altă limbă sau într-un alt format (scris mare sau format audio), vă rugăm contactați

如果你需要把文件翻译成另一种语言或者把文件变成另一种格式(大号字体或声盘), 请通过以下的邮件或电话方式联系我们。

Ma tha thu ag iarraidh eadar-theangachadh den sgrìobhainn seo ann an cànan neo cruth eile (clò mòr neo clàr clàistinneach) feuch an cuir thu fios gu

If you are deaf or have a hearing impairment, you can still communicate with the Council via Text Relay by dialling 18001 + telephone number:



Other useful contacts:

Financial Inclusion Team, Money & Benefits Advice

Communities, Housing & Infrastructure,
Aberdeen City Council,
Business Hub 1, Lower Ground West,
Marischal College, Broad Street, Aberdeen,
AB10 1AB
Tel: 03000 200 292

Advocacy Service Aberdeen

Aberdeen Business Centre,
Willowbank House,
Willowbank Road, Aberdeen AB11 6YG
Tel: 01224 332314
Email: asa@advocacy.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

41 Union Street, Aberdeen AB11 5BN
Tel: 0808 800 9060

The Care Inspectorate

Johnstone House, Rose Street, Aberdeen
AB10 1UD Tel: 01224 793870

Scottish Social Services Council

Compass House, 11 Riverside Drive,
Dundee, DD1 4NY
Tel: 0345 6030 891