

# Talk to us

## a guide



**How to make a compliment,  
a comment or a complaint  
about children's social care  
services on the Isle of Wight**

## Complaints, comments and compliments

We want you to tell us about your experience of the social care services we provide to help us improve our services. If you have a problem to tell us about, or a positive story for us, please use the contact details provided to let us know.

If you are unhappy about an aspect of our social care services, you could try talking to a social worker, their manager or an independent reviewing officer. They will try to resolve the problem quickly, informally and without fuss. However if this does not resolve the problem then please use this guide to consider whether you would like to make your complaint formal.

## What can I complain about?

Things that worry you about the way childrens' social care operates on the Isle of Wight, for example:

- A delay in decision making or provision of service.
- The attitude or behaviour of staff.
- Concern about the quality or appropriateness of a service.
- An unwelcome or disputed decision.

## How do I complain?


There are various ways in which you can complain:

- If you are a child or young person it may help to read our **Talk to Us** leaflet and return the attached form to us. You might also want to get an advocate to help you explain what you want to say.
- You can call **01983 823093** to talk to a children's services customer support officer, who can send you a complaints form to complete, or can meet with you to discuss your concerns.
- Complaint forms can also be found on **www.iwight.com** or picked up from your local council office and returned by post to: **Children and Young People's Complaints Manager, Isle of Wight Council, County Hall, Newport PO30 1UD** (freepost envelopes are available from your local council office)
- You can send an email to **childrenservicescomplaints@iow.gov.uk**

## Our commitments

Our commitments to people who make a complaint are that they will:

- be able to easily access the complaints process;
- be treated fairly during and after the complaints process – we won't take sides;
- have their complaint listened to, acknowledged, taken seriously, investigated and will get a courteous and honest response;
- be made aware of their right to seek free, independent legal advice and advocacy;
- have their complaint kept confidential;



**If you are a child or young person in care or a care leaver and need some help to get your point across you can phone 0800 616101 to speak to an advocate from the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). You might also find it helpful to talk to our children's participation and rights officer (01983) 821000.**

- be updated about progress throughout the complaints procedure;
- receive an apology when we've made a mistake and they can be assured that we will take steps to fix the problem and will learn lessons to make sure that we don't make the same mistake again.

## The complaints process

### Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

If we have done something wrong we will be more than happy at any stage of the complaints process (before or during it) to talk with you about what we can do together to put things right – we, like you, want to sort things out as quickly as possible.

### Stage one – local resolution

Most problems can be sorted out at this stage. We will always try to resolve any complaint as close to the problem as possible (e.g. by talking to a social worker or front line manager). We will acknowledge your complaint promptly. The complaints manager will ask the appropriate senior officer to look into your complaint and to let you know what they find. They will aim to do this within 10 working days. However, if we need more time we can extend our timescale up to 20 working days.

### Stage two – investigation

If you are not happy with the outcomes from stage one tell the complaints manager as soon as you can. They will explore with you what it would take to resolve the complaint. The complaints manager may then ask an independent investigator and an independent

person to look into your complaint – the independent person is there to make sure that the process of investigation is open, transparent and fair. These two people will meet with you to discuss your complaint and talk to the other people involved. They will see if anything can be done to sort things out there and then. If not, they will take details of your complaint and investigate it. They will produce a report with recommendations outlining what they think should happen. We will then look at the report and write to you to say what we are going to do as a result and we will also send you a copy of the report. We will usually want to talk to you about it as well. We aim to complete this process within 25 working days, though the law allows up to 65 working days if needed.

### Stage three – Independent review panel

If you are still unhappy, you have up to 20 working days, from when we write to you at the end of stage two, to ask for a review panel to meet. The review panel will consider your complaint and wherever possible work towards resolution. The panel works in a spirit of openness and problem solving. The panel should meet within 30 working days of your request. We will write to you 10 working days before the panel meets to let you know the time, date and place. You have the right to attend the panel and to be accompanied by another person to help you explain why you are still unhappy. The independent panel members will listen carefully and make their own decision. The panel then writes to all parties about

**If you are a child or young person and are anxious now and want to talk to someone you could phone the Youth Trust on 01983 529569 (open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, with a 24-hour answer phone service) or you can find a list of support services on [www.wightchyps.org.uk](http://www.wightchyps.org.uk)**

the decisions and recommendations they have made. The panel has five working days to issue its findings and we then have a further 15 working days to let you know what we propose to do next.

This is the close of the council's complaints process.

### **If you disagree with the council's final reply:**

- you can get advice from the Local Government Ombudsman;
- you may be able to go to the courts and/or seek judicial review.

## **Making the complaints process work better for you**

- Tell us clearly what has gone wrong, giving us as many facts as possible.
- Tell us of any additional needs you have, we may be able to help, e.g. help you find an advocate.
- Provide us with the information we ask for as quickly as you can.
- Tell us what we can do to put things right.
- **Remain calm and treat our staff politely and with respect, and remember that we are trying to help you.**

Please remember that unreasonably persistent contact or unacceptable behaviour is not appropriate within the

complaints procedure, distracts busy staff from dealing with other customers' needs and presents an unfair cost to the tax payer. We will act to contain this sort of behaviour and, if staff safety is an issue, may inform the police or take legal action.

## **Useful contacts:**

### **Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)**

**Tel: 0845 1202959**

**Website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**

**Address:** Exchange House, St Cross Lane, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5BZ

### **Legal Advice**

You have the right to seek independent legal advice

### **The Local Government Ombudsmen (LGO)**

If the council has done something wrong, the LGO will be able to offer you advice and will let you know if they, or someone else, are able to help you to put things right. The LGO will normally recommend that you follow the council's complaints process first, though the LGO has a fast-track procedure for dealing with complaints made by or on behalf of children and young people.

**Tel: 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983**

**Text 'call back' to: 0762 480 4299**

**Email: [advice@lgo.org.uk](mailto:advice@lgo.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)**

**Address:** Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH

This publication is available on request in large print, audiotope or Braille and in other languages. For further details please contact the Isle of Wight Council on (01983) 821000 (Typetalk available)