

# Have your say

## Hertfordshire County Council's Children's Services Corporate Complaints Process

An online form for registering compliments, comments and complaints can be found at:  
[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/complaints)

### Who else can help?

If you would like help and support from someone who is not part of HCC you may contact:

Organisation	Telephone	Website
Advisory Centre for Education	0300 0115 142	<a href="http://www.ace-ed.org.uk">www.ace-ed.org.uk</a>
Carers in Hertfordshire	01992 586969	<a href="http://www.carersinherts.org.uk">www.carersinherts.org.uk</a>
Childline	0800 11 11	<a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a>
Citizens Advice Bureau	0844 411 1444	<a href="http://www.adviceguide.org.uk">www.adviceguide.org.uk</a>
Family Lives	0808 800 2222	<a href="http://www.familylives.org.uk">www.familylives.org.uk</a>
HertsHelp (Advocacy Services)	0300 123 4044	<a href="http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hertshelp">www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hertshelp</a>
NSPCC	0808 800 5000	<a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk">www.nspcc.org.uk</a>
PoWER (Advocacy Service)	0300 456 2370	<a href="http://www.power.net">www.power.net</a>

Advocacy for children and young people is available from the following service:

National Youth Advocacy Service	0808 808 1001	<a href="mailto:help@nyas.net">help@nyas.net</a> (Email)
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**Please note that the Complaints Team is not an emergency service.**

If you require urgent assistance, you should contact the Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 4043 and they will connect you to the relevant service. Lines are open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to 4pm on Saturdays.

Textphone: 0300 123 4041

Calls from Typetalk Users and those requiring a Language Interpreter (via Language Line) are also welcomed. Sign Video and BSL Video Interpreting Services are also available.

## **This complaints procedure DOES NOT cover:**

- Matters where the grounds for complaint arose more than 12 months ago, unless you are able to demonstrate a good reason why you could not have made your complaint within 12 months.
- Matters for which there is a formal right of appeal through an independent review process.
- Matters subject to past, present or pending legal proceedings.
- Complaints about County Council policies that affect all or most people using the Council's services. You can however speak to your County Councillor regarding this.
- Complaints about County Councillors.
- Complaints about matters over which HCC has no control, e.g. services provided by District or Borough Councils or the National Health Service (NHS).
- Complaints made by applicants for jobs within the Council.
- Complaints about Schools and Libraries.
- Staff Disciplinary and Staff Grievance matters.
- Complaints where there is a separate complaints procedure.

In addition to this, not everyone has an automatic right to complain due to the risk of breaching Data Protection legislation. For example, extended family members do not have an automatic right to complain. Someone with Parental Responsibility for the child/ren in question would normally need to consent to a third party taking the complaint forward on their behalf.

## **How will my complaint be dealt with?**

Before submitting a formal complaint, it is important to try and discuss your concerns with the service you are dealing with informally. This is usually the quickest way to sort matters out.

If you decide to raise a formal complaint, please make sure that you provide clear information regarding what your complaint is about and your desired outcome(s). This will enable the Complaints Manager to identify and decide on the most appropriate process to try and resolve your concerns.

If you add further information or change some of the detail regarding your complaint after submitting it, the timescale for response will be revised and may even start afresh. This is at the discretion of the Complaints Manager.

HCC's Corporate Complaints Process is as follows:

## Stage 1 Local Resolution

Acknowledgement within 3 working days.

A Manager of the service being complained about will investigate your complaint.

***You should expect to receive a response in writing within 10 - 20 working days. Should you remain dissatisfied, you will need to write to the Complaints Team (within 20 working days of the date on the Stage 1 response), confirming your outstanding concerns and desired outcomes.***

## Stage 2 Review by a Senior Manager

If escalation to Stage 2 is agreed, the Complaints Manager will appoint a Senior Manager to undertake the investigation.

***A response will be provided between 5 weeks (25 working days) and 13 weeks (65 working days).***

This concludes the Corporate Complaints Process.

**Please note that there is no automatic right to escalate your complaint to Stage 2 within this process.** For example, if your complaint has already been fully upheld at Stage 1, or if the Complaints Manager decides that Stage 2 would not provide you with a demonstrably different outcome, this will be communicated to you in writing with reasons and an alternative option will be given. For example, you may be signposted to the LGSCO or ICO at an earlier stage.

## If you remain dissatisfied:

You may approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), which is completely independent of the Council, at the following address:

LGSCO, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH, Telephone: 0300 061 0614, Website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

If your complaint relates to the handling of data, you may approach the Information Commissioner's Office as follows:

Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, Tel: 0303 123 1113

Customer Service Team – Complaints

Postal Point: CH0118 | Resources Department | County Hall | Hertford | SG13 8DF

Email: [cs.complaints@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:cs.complaints@hertfordshire.gov.uk)

Website: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/complaints)

This information can be made available on request in other formats, including large print, Braille, audio and other languages.