

NCC Complaints Management

All Complaints - Informal Resolution Stage

When an issue is raised by a customer, wherever possible an informal resolution for the customer will be sought **within 24 hours**. If a customer issue can be dealt with informally and the customer is satisfied with the outcome, an informal resolution enquiry would be recorded rather than a complaint.

NCC wide other than Children's and Adult's Social Care

Children's complex care / safeguarding etc.

Adult social care complaints (as defined by regulations)

Stage 1

If no immediate resolution can be found in **1 working day**, or a service fails to carry out the agreed informal resolution, and the Council is re-contacted about the matter, a formal complaint will be recorded onto the relevant complaints system and acknowledged by the responsible service within **3 working days** of the complaint being made.

Services will also be responsible for seeking a resolution to the issue and responding directly to customers within **15 working days** (inclusive of the 3 days for acknowledgement).

Stage 1

If no immediate resolution can be found, a formal complaint will be recorded onto the relevant system and acknowledged within **2 working days** of the complaint being made.

At this point, the complaint will be raised with the most appropriate person to deal with the complaint (usually a social work team manager). A response to the customer is expected within **10 working days**; however this can be extended to **20 working days** with the co-operation of the complainant, depending on the complexity of the issue.

Complaint resolution

All complaints are acknowledged within 3 working days.

This complaint resolution process is person centred with an emphasis on outcomes and learning:

- A resolution plan is agreed with the complainant, which may be updated if necessary in the course of the investigation. The plan is appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances of the case, taking into account risk, seriousness, complexity or sensitivity of events
- A timetable is also agreed with the complainant. We would expect to respond to straightforward complaints within **10 working days**, and would usually expect to respond to other complaints within **20 working days**, though we make individual decisions based on the circumstances.
- The Regulations do not set out multiple stages for complaints handling, but some particularly complex or serious complaints may need a 'formal' investigation to resolve, which can in some cases involve an independent investigator.

Stage 2

If the customer expresses dissatisfaction following the result of the stage 1 investigation, the complaint will be escalated to stage 2. Stage 2 will consist of an independent investigation of both the original complaint and the Council's response. The results of this investigation will be provided to the customer within **20 working days** of escalation to stage 2.

Stage 2

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response provided at stage 1, they may request an independent review of the issue. Investigators independent of the Council undertake stage 2 investigations, which should take up to **25 working days** but can be extended up to **65 working days**, depending on the complexity of the issue.

A report is produced at the conclusion of stage 2 investigations which is signed off by the Corporate Director of Children's Services. Recommendations made within this report form service improvement initiatives.

Local Government Ombudsman

All complainants receive a final written response from the appropriate manager in which they are directed to the **Local Government Ombudsman** if they remain dissatisfied

Local Government Ombudsman

Customers who remain dissatisfied following the Stage 2 investigation may refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The LGO will investigate the Council's response to the initial complaint and provide a decision as to whether further action is required from the Council.

The Contact Centre will act as a gateway for the LGO in relation to complaints. Individual services will be required to provide any required information in a timely manner should an LGO investigation take place.

Stage 3

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the result of stage 2 investigations, they may request a review of the decision. Complainants are required to raise their request within **20 working days**, at which point an independent review panel, including Legal Services involvement, is convened within **30 working days** of the request being received.

Panel findings are to be reported back to complainant within **5 working days**, with a direct, formal response to be with the complainant within **15 working days**.

Local Government Ombudsman

Customers who remain dissatisfied following stage 3 investigation may refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The LGO will investigate the Council's response to the initial complaint and provide a decision as to whether further action is required from the Council.