

## **Hampshire County Council Complaints Procedure**

The complaints procedure makes sure we look properly into your complaint and give you a considered response. If we get something wrong, we will do our best to put it right. We will review our policies and procedures to try to stop it happening again. We will admit our mistakes and offer a full apology. Please note that Adult Services and Children's Services departments, including schools, have separate arrangements for complaints.

### **Stage One**

Talking with staff will usually resolve things, so the first thing we ask you to do is to raise the matter with the member of staff concerned. You can telephone, email or write to staff. We hope they will be able to put things right straight away or explain why they can't.

### **Stage Two**

If you do not want to contact individual members of staff or are unhappy with their response, then you should contact the department responsible for that service. Our contact centre staff will help if you are not sure which department to contact. The chief officer for that service will make sure that the department investigates your complaint.

### **Stage Three**

We hope that you will be satisfied with the Stage Two response. If not, you can ask the County Council to consider your complaint through the Corporate Complaints team, which is part of the office of the County Council's Monitoring Officer. This process is called a Corporate Investigation and will make sure that your complaint is looked at by officers who have not been involved with your concerns or issues. You will be given a written response setting out conclusions.

The role of the Corporate Investigation is to check the correct policies and procedures have been followed and applied in any decision making process. We will not investigate any issues or complaints which are subject to an appeal or review process. We are also not able to over-turn appeal decisions. The complaints team can recommend changes to improve services or processes to the chief officer of individual departments.

### **Complaints made from 1 January 2024 relating to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) service**

Complaints relating to the SEN service will be managed via a two stage complaints process and in line with our Corporate Complaints process. This is by combining stage two and stage three into a more streamlined process. The process is designed to ensure that complaints raised are addressed thoroughly and promptly. The two stages of the complaints process are detailed below:

**Stage One:** Upon receiving a complaint that is accepted as a Corporate stage one complaint, it will be investigated by a relevant member of the SEN

service. They will then respond to the complaint within 20 working days. This local response, coming directly from the case handling service, will see the majority of complaints resolved at this stage.

**Stage Two:** If the complainant is not satisfied with the response from stage one, they may escalate their complaint to stage two. An Investigating Officer, who works within the Children's Services Complaints Team, will then conduct a further investigation and respond to the escalated complaint within 40 working days. The Children's Services Complaints Team, and as a result the Investigating Officer, is not within the direct line management of the SEN service and therefore are able to conduct an independent investigation. This stage concludes the complaints process.

**LGSCO:** The complainant will be informed within the stage two response that should they remain dissatisfied they may approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

### **Local Government Ombudsman**

If you are unhappy with the way we have dealt with your complaint at the end of a Stage Three investigation, or feel we have treated you unfairly, you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman on 0300 061 0614, visit their web site [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk) or alternatively you can write to the Ombudsman at PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 8JB. The Ombudsman will generally expect you to have taken your complaint through our own procedures first.