When using Stage Two:

- We will acknowledge your complaint within 3 workings days
- You will be contacted by the Investigating Officer for your complaint, who will usually meet you to confirm: the detail of your complaint, what you want to achieve, and if your expectations are achievable. In some cases, e.g. your complaint has been made in writing and is clear, there may be no need to meet. It is helpful if you present any evidence that you can offer in support of your complaint, e.g. contact details for witnesses, reports from other professionals etc. if appropriate.
- We will write to you confirming the details of your complaint, what you want to achieve, and what the investigation can cover.
- We will give you a full, written response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days. If our investigation takes longer than 20 working days we will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

Q Will my Complaint be treated confidentially?

A To address a complaint, we may have to share it with colleagues within the Council or with people you mention in your complaint. If you don't wish a person mentioned in your complaint to be contacted, you should tell the person who is investigating it. However, if you do so it might mean that the complaint can't be fully investigated. If the person investigating your complaint wishes to consult anyone outwith the Council who is not mentioned in your complaint, he or she will ask your permission. The exception to this is where it is necessary to share information in terms of Child Protection.

Q What if I want to withdraw my complaint?

A Usually this will terminate an investigation but not always. It may be necessary to look into the complaint to ensure the quality of the service or for Child Protection reasons.

Q Can a Complaint be Considered Unacceptable?

A Stirling Council has approved an Employee Guide for Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour. Such behaviour includes, among other things, changing the substance of a complaint or introducing unrelated concerns, unreasonable persistence inpursuing a complaint such as refusing to accept explanations of what a service can and cannot do, and continuing to pursue a previously investigated complaint without presenting any new information.
Depending on the form of unacceptable conduct we will take appropriate action. For example, we may refuse to investigate a complaint where the complainant is unreasonably persistent. In such cases complainants will be informed of our decision and their right to refer the matter to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

What if I am still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated your Stage Two complaint, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it. The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting SPSO)
- events that happened or you became aware of, more than a year ago.

You can contact the SPSO:

In person:
SPSO, 4 Melville Street
Edinburgh, EH3 7NS

By Post:
SPSO, Freeport EH641
Edinburgh, EH3 0BR

Freephone: 0800 377 7330
Website: www.spso.org.uk

Online contact: www.spso.org.uk/contact-us
Mobile site: http://m.spso.org.uk

Information to help Parents and Carers make the best choice

Information Service: 01786 442626

Stirling Council

Phone 0845 277 7000
Email info@stirling.gov.uk
www.stirling.gov.uk

Formats

Copies of our leaflets are available by request in a range of other languages, large print and on audio tape. To request articles in any of these formats please email or call 0845 277 7000.

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Stirling Council. May 2013

Schools, Learning and Education

Making a Complaint

A Guide for Parents and Guardians

Introduction

The Schools, Learning and Education Service recognise the vital role that parents play in supporting and strengthening their children's learning. We are committed, therefore, to fostering positive relationships with parents.

We are keen to:

- Encourage good communication between schools, parents and families
- Create a productive partnership for the benefit of the child or young person

Despite this, parents may wish to make a complaint. We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf. The Schoos, Learning and Education complaints process is part of Stirling Councils' corporate complaints processes.

Here are examples of education-related issues you might complain about:

- Delays in responding to your enquiries and requests – e.g. for information about your child's progress
- Failure to provide a service – e.g. where a child has a right to school transport
- Our standard of service – e.g. your child's right to be taught by qualified and competent staff
- Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- Council policy – e.g. you believe that a policy does not meet legal standards or national guidelines
- failure to follow proper procedure – e.g. child protection procedures

Your complaint can involve more than one service or be about someone working on our behalf.

You have 6 months to make a complaint after the event that you want to complain about takes place. If you first learn of the issue about which you want to complain after this point, you have a further 6 months to complain. In exceptional circumstances the Service may investigate matters more than a year old, but it is not obliged to do so.

What can't I complain about?

Here are some things we can't deal with through our complaints procedure:

- A routine first time request for a service or action – e.g. informing the school that your child told you she is being bullied and asking them to resolve this.
- Requests for compensation from the Council
- Things that are covered by a right of appeal, e.g. Exclusion from school which has its own statutory process. In these cases we will give you information and advice to help you.

Who can complain?

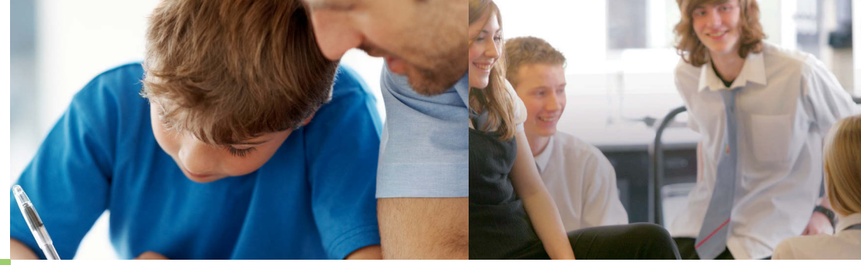
Anyone can complain who is the parent or legal guardian of a child or a person authorised to complain on his/her behalf. For example, a child's grandparent who is not the legal guardian needs authority from the child's parent or guardian. This would normally mean a note or another reasonable form of evidence to show that the person responsible for the child had agreed.

You can also authorise an advocate to complain for you. You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, telephone 0131 260 5380; website: www.siaa.org.uk

What can I expect?

You can expect the Schools, Learning and Education Service to:

- Work with you to find a solution that is in the best interest of your child
- To have your child's views taken into consideration
- To give you full information about the outcome of your complaint and any action that the Service takes if your complaint is upheld or partly upheld
- Tell you who is dealing with your complaint.



How do I complain?

You can complain in person, by phone, email or by letter. We have a 2 stage complaints procedure.

Stage One - Frontline resolution

In the first instance please complain to your child's school or nursery, telling them as much as you can about the complaint, what has gone wrong and what you want them to do to resolve the matter. A senior member of staff, either the head teacher or depute head, will be responsible for looking into complaints. Heads are senior managers with a high level of responsibility for your child's learning and welfare and able to look into most matters. However, the Head may refer the Stage One complaint to the Schools, Learning and Education Service centrally, e.g. if it is about the conduct of the Head or too complex to be dealt with at front-line service level.

The school or nursery will give you our decision at Stage One within 5 working days or fewer unless there are exceptional circumstances. If we need further time we will ask you to agree an extension of up to 5 further days. If the Stage One complaint has been referred to Education centrally your response will come from there.

Stage Two - Investigation

If you are dissatisfied with your Stage One response, you can move to Stage Two. Stage Two deals with 2 types of complaints: those not resolved at Stage One and those not appropriate for Stage One, for example the conduct of a Headteacher or Head of Establishment, or complaints too complex for a Headteacher or Head of Establishment to deal with.

To move to Stage Two, you should email info@stirling.gov.uk and ask for a formal investigation under Stage Two, or you can ask the Head of School or Nursery to move the complaint to Stage 2 on your behalf.