



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION**  
**10 March 2009**

# ITEM 7

Report of the Corporate Director for Children and Young People

## **Annual Children and Young People's Social Care Services Complaints 2007/08**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 Consider and comment on the Annual Children and Young People's Social Care Services complaints during 2007/08.

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Complaints and compliments from the service users provide valuable information to organisations and help them to deliver effective services. Local authorities with social services are required to submit annual reports to Ofsted on the procedure and performance of social services complaints. The Children and Young People's Social Care Complaints Procedure is separate from, but complementary to, the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedures
- 2.2 This statutory annual report looks at Children and Young People's Social Care Services complaints during 2006/07.

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<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Complaints and Representations Procedure Annual report

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

- 1.1 None arising from this report.

**Legal**

2. The Children Act 1989 and the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 ( as amended by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990) requires social services authorities to set up representations or complaints procedures.

**Personnel**

3. None arising from this report.

**Equalities impact**

4. Effective complaints procedures assist in ensuring equality of access to services across communities and for individuals.

**Corporate Priorities**

5. The proposal comes under the Council's Objectives of supporting everyone in learning and achieving and in building healthy and independent communities through improving the standard of social care for children and young people.

**DERBY CITY COUNCIL**

**Children and Young People's Department**

**(Social Care complaints)**

**ANNUAL REPORT for period April 2007 – March 2008**

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## **1. Context**

This report provides information about complaints made during the twelve months between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008 under the complaints and representations procedures established through the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations, 2006.

This is the second separate Annual Report since the Council restructured its services. Social Care is divided between the Children and Young People's Department (which comprises the former Education Service and staff dealing with children and young people from the former Social Services department) and the Adult and Social Care Department.

Children and Young People's Services are monitored and inspected by OfSTED. We are also part of the regional care services improvement partnership with other social care and NHS organisations across the East Midlands.

Each year the department is involved with over 2000 children, young people, their families and carers as well as other interested parties. These amount to over 30,000 interactions which could, potentially, lead to a complaint. Some of the children and young people require services for only a short period of time and others are likely to require lifelong 24/7 services.

Complaints and compliments provide valuable feedback from our service users about the services we provide. By analysing these we can obtain insight into parts of our service where we perform well and those parts that may need attention. The department aims to minimise complaints but values the learning we can derive from them. We want to encourage users to feel confident about raising concerns, and staff to proactively deal with customer issues and strive for quality improvement. Consequently, fluctuations in the numbers of complainants are not, themselves, a measure of performance. Nonetheless, it is important that complaints are acknowledged and responded to promptly.

All timescales contained within this report are in working days.

## **1.1 What is a Complaint?**

We use the following definition as a guide “A complaint is an expressed dissatisfaction or disquiet for an individual child or young person, which requires a response”.

If it is possible to resolve the matter immediately (within 24 hours), there is no need to engage the complaints procedure.

If there is any question about whether a matter is an actual complaint, the Complaints Manager will seek legal advice.

## **1.2 Who can make a Complaint?**

- Any child, young person, their parent or person with parental responsibility for them who is being looked after by the local authority or is in need.
- Any local authority foster carer, including those caring for children placed by independent fostering agencies.
- Any child, young person, their parent or person with parental responsibility for them who is being looked after by the local authority or is in need.
- Children leaving care.
- Special Guardians.
- A child or young person (or their parent) with a Special Guardianship Order.
- Anyone who has applied for an assessment under section 14F (3) or (4).
- Any child or young person who may be adopted, their parents and guardians.
- Anyone wanting to adopt a child.
- Anyone else the adoption services covers.
- People who are adopted, their parents, natural parents and former guardians.
- Anyone the local authority considers has sufficient interest in the child or young person’s welfare.
- An adult representing a child or young person, where the young person is happy for this to happen and the representative reflects their views. The local authority – Complaints Manager and operational manager - can decide whether the representative is suitable.

## **2. Stages of the Complaints Procedure**

The complaints procedure has three stages:

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution
- Stage 2 – Investigation
- Stage 3 – Review Panel

Details of the timescales and process involved at each stage are outlined in Appendix 1.

## **3. Stage 1 Complaints - Statistics**

The Complaints Manager recorded 32 complaints at stage 1 of the complaints procedure, during 2007-08, compared with 24 in 2006-07, 36 in 2005-06 and 24 in 2004-05. This figure is the total number of complaints that the department handled.

**Total complaints made:**

Between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008, we received 32 complaints with 25 closed (at Stage 1).

Date Received	Complainant	Referrer of Complaint	Young Person/ CIC	Complaint Type/Reason	Service Area/Issue	Resolved
5 April 2007	Mr L S	Parent		Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Social Work Services	Yes
13 April 2007	Mr S B	Parent		Assessment – Children’s	Family Support	Yes
23 April 2007	Mr and Mrs S	Foster Carer		Decision	Social Work Services	No
30 April 2007	Miss V F	Service User	Yes	Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Social Work Services	Withdrawn
30 April 2007	Mr P D	Parent		Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Social Work Services	No
4 May 2007	Ms S W	Foster Carer		Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Social Work Services	Yes
16 May 2007	Mrs L D	Parent		Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Family Support	Yes
22 May 2007	Mr S D	Service User	Yes	Decision	Social Work Services	Withdrawn
29 May 2007	Mr W D	Parent		Quality of Service	Social Work Services	Yes
6 June 2007	Mrs P W	Parent		Quality of Service	Family Support	Yes
11 June 2007	Mr A S	Service User	Yes	Decision – Children’s	Social Work Services	Yes
18 June 2007	Ms C W	Parent		Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Family Support	Yes
27 June 2007	Miss L P	Parent		Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Family Support	Yes
27 June 2007	Mr T S	School		Quality of Service	Social Work Services	Yes
9 July 2007	Ms C P	Parent		Assessment	Social Work Services	Yes
10 July 2007	Mr T S	Partner		Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Disability - Children's	Yes
23 July 2007	Mr J D	MP		Assessment	Social Work Services	Yes
01/08/2007	Mr M L	Relative		Assessment	Family Support	Yes
18 August 2007	Mrs J H	Parent		Refusal of Service	Disability - Children's	Yes
20 August 2007	Ms L H	Parent		Quality of Service	Social Work Services	Yes

24/09/2007	Mrs S A	Foster Carer		Delay in Service	Foster Care	Yes
26/09/2007	Ms M M	Relative		Assessment	Social Work Services	Yes
16/10/2007	Mr M S	Advocate		Quality of Service	Social Work Services	Yes
19/10/2007	Mr E	MP		Assessment	Social Work Services	Yes
25 October 2007	Ms S K	Service User		Quality of Service	Social Work Services	Yes
30 October 2007	Ms S H	Service User		Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Family Support	No
30 November 2007	Mr F O	Parent		Decision – Children’s	Family Support	Yes
7 January 2008	Miss T B	Legal Representative		Conduct/Attitude of Staff	Social Work Services	Yes
8 January 2008	Mrs St	Relative		Contact	Social Work Services	Yes
15 January 2008	Mrs Sc	Neighbour		Quality of Service	Social Work Services	Yes
21 January 2008	Miss K J	Service User		Quality of Service	Family Support	Withdrawn
11 March 2008	Mr G R	Parent		Quality of Service	Family Support	Yes

Of the above complaints, 1 progressed to Stage 2.

### On-going complaints from 2005-06

There was one on-going complaint from 2005 -6 (Ms C) at Stage 2.

Since 1 July 2007 a new Complaints database has been in operation and it is enabling more robust processing and recording of Stage 1 complaints.

### 3.1 Comparison with the preceding year

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Stage 1: Local Resolution	36	24	32
Stage 2: Investigation	4	2	1
Stage 3: Review	*1	*1	0

Ombudsman	0	2	0
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\* These complaints are the same on-going complaint (Ms C) that started in 2005 and concluded in 2006.

This indicates a 33% increase in complaints from last year within the Department at Stage 1 (from 24 in 2006/7 to 32 in 2007/8). However the number is lower than 2005/6 (36).

This also sits within the wider context of complaints activity in the Council as a whole. Across the Council there was a 17% increase in the number of complaints recorded in the same period.

There is no pattern nor apparent reasons for the increase in the level of complaints:

- some of them can be attributed to poor communication with service users, such as delays about decisions
- others relate to individual workers and suggest that a relationship or trust has temporarily broken down between the service user and the worker
- others relate to decisions that have been made which have led to an outcome which the service user is not happy about.

The underlying reasons behind some of these may be staffing levels and the stress on staff particularly in Social Work Services which results in backlogs of work and loose ends not being tied up. We feel there is further work that can be done to improve communications, in particular letter writing explaining decisions. Better explanations of actions should be given so service users are fully aware and have a greater understanding of what will happen. We have identified further Local Government Ombudsman training for staff (both service managers and Heads of Service) in how to deal with complaints which will take place in Spring 2009.

It should be noted that a complaint is reborn when it passes to the next stage in the process, thus Stage 3 complaints are also recorded at Stage 2 and Stage 2 complaints are also recorded at Stage 1.

### 3.2 Nature of complaints during 2007/08

<b>Complaint Type</b>	<b>2006-07</b>		<b>2007-08</b>	
	Number	%	Number	%
Assessment – Children’s	6	25%	6	18.8%
Conduct/Attitude of Staff	6	25%	10	31.2%
Contact	0	0%	1	3.1%
Decision – Children’s	1	4.2%	4	12.5%
Delay in Service	3	15.5%	1	3.1%
Lack of Communication	2	8.4%	0	0%
Lack of Information	1	4.2%	0	0%
Policy Issue	0	0%	0	3.1%
Quality of Service	3	12.5%	9	28.1%
Refusal of Service	1	4.2%	1	3.1%
Reduction of Service	1	4.2%	0	0%



<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>		<b>32</b>	
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The highest number of complaints received during this year related to Conduct and Attitude of Staff, 31.2% and Quality of Service, 28.1%. This was a different pattern to 2006/7 when Assessment and Conduct/Attitude of Staff were the most significant.

- Complaints about Conduct and Attitude have increased from 25% to 31.2%
- Complaints about Quality of Service have increased from 12.5% to 28.1%

On the more positive side:

- complaints about Delay in Service have reduced from 15.5% to 3.1%
- complaints about Assessment have decreased 25% to 18.8%

### **3.3 Outcomes of complaints**

26 were resolved, 3 were not resolved and 3 were withdrawn by the complainant. Of the 3 that were not resolved one (Mr and Mrs S) went to Stage 2, one was resolved in May 2008 (Mr PD) and one is on-going at Stage 1 (Ms S H).

A key requirement of the reform of our complaints procedures has been the importance of informing our service users of the outcome of their complaints. The responses have been monitored and some have been edited for Plain English. We aim to do this for all Stage 1 responses in future. We also plan to provide some model letters which include some suggested phrases that could be used to apologise when things have gone wrong.

### **3.4 Response times**

The Department responded to six complaints within 10 working days, 21.4% of all complaints received.

The average response time increased in 2007-08 and is 20.1 days, compared with 17 days in 2006-07, 10 days in 2005-06 and 26 days in 2004-05. All staff are made aware of the statutory deadlines for dealing with complaints but we believe that managers still do not recognise the importance of responding within the timescales and complaints are not seen as having equal priority with other important tasks. When staff are dealing with court reports, child protection issues etc, these will inevitably take priority. Where complainants are consulting solicitors, this can also cause a delay in their response time.

This figure should be seen against the Council's objective of responding to 85% within its target time of 10 working days.

The percentage of corporate Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days was 84%.

We believe the complexity of social care complaints is the principal reason why our performance is different.

It is essential that all teams delivering services (including the Department's contractors) formally capture and record complaints. It is only by doing so that complaints can be tracked and where things have gone wrong managers can ensure that matters are put right. Senior management therefore regularly encourage teams to recognise and record complaints and report these to the Complaints Officer.

### **3.5 Referrer**

Following the guidance produced by the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills, we are identifying who is making the complaint to get a greater understanding of our complainants.

### Complaint made by:

<b>Children's Services – person making the complaint</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>
MP	0	2
Councillor	0	0
Employee	0	0
Doctor	0	0
School	1	1
Service User	1	5
Parent	9	13
Relative	10	4
Friend	0	0
Legal Rep	0	1
Partner	0	1
Neighbour	1	1
Foster Carer	2	3
Advocate	0	1

We see it as positive that more young people are empowered to make complaints about services which they are dissatisfied with themselves. We believe this is as a result of the advocacy work that has been in place with VOYCE for the past few years which has encouraged them to feel more confident about complaining. This also reflects a more approachable and accessible procedure. We have reviewed our complaints forms over the past year in consultation with children and young people and recently redesigned and reprinted the forms.

### 3.6 Services complained about

During 2007-08 the largest number of complaints received, 19, were about Social Work Services. 10 complaints were received about Family Support, 2 about Disability and one was about Foster Care.

During 2006-07 the largest number of complaints received, 12, were about Assessment and Care Planning, 5 complaints were received about Family Support, 3 regarding Fostering and Adoption, 2 about Reception and Hospital Services, 1 concerning Integrated Disabled Children's Services and 1 complaint was investigated jointly with Derbyshire County Council.

During 2005-06, 22 of the 36 complaints received were about Social Work services and 6 were about Foster Care.

### 3.7 Complaint Type

In 2007-08, 10 complaints were about the conduct/attitude of staff, 7 were about Assessment, 8 were about quality of service, 4 were about Decisions, 1 was about contact, 1 was regarding a delay in service and one was about a refusal of service.

#### 4. Equalities Information

Complaints often involve all family members. These figures include the equalities information for all the children in a family, when the complaint made was on behalf of the whole family. However, not all complaints are about existing service users, but are about the complainant's belief that there is a need for services. We would not therefore hold equalities information about these children and young people if they are not service users.

##### Gender

Male	<b>32</b>
Female	<b>17</b>

##### Ethnic Origin

White British	<b>38</b>
White Irish	
Other White background	<b>5</b>
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	
Mixed White & Black African	
Mixed White & Asian	
Other mixed background	
Asian British	<b>1</b>
Other Asian background	
Black British	
Other Black background	
Chinese	
Other ethnic group	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>

##### Disability (including mental health problems)

Of the information recorded, one service user has a hearing impairment and one service user has a physical disability.

##### Age

Under 5 years	<b>8</b>
5-10 years	<b>15</b>
11-18 years	<b>26</b>

## **5. Stage 2 Complaints**

There were two Stage 2 complaints during the year, one was ongoing from 2005-06 and one was new in 2007-08. This compares to two stage 2 complaints in 2006-07 and 4 in 2005-06.

The investigation into the on-going complaint from 2005-06 was completed in May 2008 but is complicated by various issues, particularly as it includes the Health Authority and Social care services in Norwich.

The other related to a decision made in relation to a foster child. The complaint was dealt with outside the required time period but this was because of leave arrangements and a family bereavement. The complainant was kept fully informed and agreed to the delays.

0 complaints were subsequently withdrawn following further action and communication at the local level.

0 Stage 2 complaints required an investigation to be undertaken by external independent investigating officers.

Both complaints came under the Local Authority Social Services Act complaints procedure.

0 came under the Children Act procedure.

### **Response Times:**

	<b>2006- 07</b>	<b>2007- 08</b>
Within 25 days	<b>1</b>	
Within 65 days		
Over timescale	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Withdrawn	<b>1*</b>	
Pending	<b>1*</b>	

\* The complaint which was withdrawn and the complaint that is still pending are both included in the figure for complaints that were over the timescale.

**Outcomes:**

	<b>2006- 07</b>	<b>2007- 08</b>
Resolved	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Withdrawn	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Pending	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Unresolved	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

**Nature of Complaint:**

	<b>2006- 07</b>	<b>2007- 08</b>
Assessment – Children’s		
Conduct or Attitude of staff		
Contact		
Decision – Children’s		<b>1</b>
Quality of service	<b>2</b>	
Delay in Service		
Reduction of Service		
Refusal of Service		
Lack of Communication		
Lack of Information		
Policy Issue		
Failure to carry out other required action		
Other Reason	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

The nature of the Stage 2 complaint recorded as ‘other reason’ was about a child held in Derby whilst an investigation was carried out without the consent of the parent (the complainant), and there are several issues raised within the complaint.

## 6. Stage 3 Complaints

There were no Stage 3 complaints this year. This compares with one Stage 3 complaint in 2006-07.

## 7. Ombudsman complaints and enquiries

During the year, 2 complaints were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman.

## 8. Percentage escalation

The following table indicates how many complaints have escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and how many have progressed from Stage 2 to Stage 3. By measuring these figures as a percentage we are able to gauge customer satisfaction with our responses to their complaints.

Escalation	Number	Percentage
Stage 1 to Stage 2	1 complaint out of 32	3.1%
Stage 2 to Stage 3	0	0%

The escalation rate for complaints from Stage 2 to Stage 3 is 0%.

## 9. Expenditure

There are on-going costs attached to delivering an effective complaints service for the Department. These costs should be seen against the inherent costs of not providing this service (users will continue to be dissatisfied if there was no complaints procedure or team, but the Department would not have a strategic approach and there would be less opportunities for resolution).

### 9.1 Cost of delivering stages:

The Department does not employ Independent Investigators from outside the Department, thus there has been no expenditure on this.

During 2007-08 there was one Stage 2 investigation where an Independent Person was appointed. We pay Independent People a daily rate plus expenses for travel. However, investigations also involve other staff employed by the department:

- the Complaints Manager and members of the complaints team:
  - in discussing, drafting and agreeing the statement of complaint with the complainant

- appointing an investigating officer and independent person to carry out the investigation
- the Investigating Officer who carries out the investigation. They have to read the relevant files, meet the independent person, the complainant/s, relevant staff and others involved in the complaint.

These costs are not generally calculated, but for the one Stage 2 investigation the costs have been calculated as:

	£
Complaints Manager (3 days), complaints team (1 day)	840
Investigating Officer (4 days)	1054
Other CYP staff (1 day)	<u>145</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,039</b>

Training costs for Derby and Derbyshire Independent Persons Panel are shared with Derbyshire County Council.

During 2007-08 we incurred £461.33 costs. Other costs were paid by Derbyshire County Council.

There was no expenditure on independent investigations.

	£
Investigating Officers	0
Independent Persons	399.96
Review Panellists	
Advocates	
Training	461.33
Other	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£861.29</b>

## 9.2 Compensation Payments

The Council provides compensation if, after a complaint has been investigated or as part of an Ombudsman's investigation, it is concluded that:

- the Ombudsman would find that there has been maladministration by the Council causing injustice to the complainant; and
- he would recommend that compensation should therefore be paid to the complainant.

During the year no compensation payments were made.

## **10. Alternative Dispute Resolution**

During the year there was no requirement for local initiatives to implement ADR and its success in meeting customer satisfaction thus remains untested.

## **11 Complaints dealt with by the local authority and NHS Bodies**

Sometimes a complaint crosses over boundaries between the Local Authority and the NHS. Where this happens, people who use the services should not have to worry about who to approach with complaints about different aspects of the service they receive. Instead, the complaint can be made in its entirety to any one of the bodies involved. The regulations place a duty on local authorities and NHS bodies to co-operate with each other and to agree which of the two bodies takes the lead in handling complaints against them, to ensure a co-ordinated response.

Ideally, both responses should be completed simultaneously and reports delivered to the complainant together. To facilitate this, the two bodies should aim to work to the shorter of their respective complaints procedure timescales. A new procedure for investigating joint health/social care complaints has been produced and agreed for both Derby City and Derbyshire during 2007.

## **12. Learning Lessons/Practice Improvements**

In July 2007 we reprinted our two complaints leaflets – one for children and young people and the other for adults wishing to complain about children's services. Our old leaflets were reviewed by the council's Plain English group and Plain Talking group, as well as by a Young People's Consultation group made up of children in care. These groups provided useful feedback on both language and design which helped us in the new design and rewrite of the leaflets.

Complaints provide senior managers with useful information about the way that services are delivered. The consideration of complaints has resulted in lessons learned as follows:

### Stage 1:

- Ensure all appropriate staff understand that issues raised by service users must be dealt with quickly and not ignored and of the procedures timescale in order to improve response times
- Ensure all Stage 1 response letters are monitored by the Complaints Manager before they are sent to complainants
- Provide Local Government Ombudsman training for service managers and Heads of Service to improve the quality of complaints handling
- Investigate the use of mediation in resolving complaints by learning from other local authorities.

### Stage 2:

- Ensure procedures are followed rigorously where services are to be withdrawn
- Ensure that service users and their parents/carers are kept informed of all decisions made affecting them



- Ensure service users are given an explanation of what is to happen and why it will happen before it happens not after

Stage 3

- Ensure procedures are followed in identifying the wishes of children looked after and consult them wherever possible about all decisions affecting them

*Complaints Manager: Sian Hoyle*

*Date: 12 February 2009*

## APPENDIX 1

**Stage 1.** This is the most important stage of the complaints procedure. The Department's teams and external contractors providing services on our behalf are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible at this initial point. At the first stage the local managers will normally handle it.

The Council's complaints procedure requires complaints at stage 1 to be responded to within 10 working days (with an automatic extension to a further 10 days where necessary).

**Stage 2.** This stage is usually implemented where the matter is not resolved locally or the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of Stage 1. The complainant has 20 working days from the expiry of the Stage 1 time limit, or the date the Council sent its response, to request consideration at Stage 2. The complainant has the right to move to Stage 2 if the timescale has elapsed for Stage 1 and the complainant has not received an outcome, although this timescale can be extended with the complainant's agreement.

Stage 2 is a detailed investigation conducted by a manager from outside the originating service of the complaint. The Complaints Manager will appoint an Independent Person (from a Panel of Independent People held by the department for both Adult and Children and Young People's services in both Derby City and Derbyshire) accompanies the Investigating Officer in all complaints. An Assistant Director adjudicates on the findings.

Since September 2006, Stage 2 complaints falling within the Children and Young People's statutory complaints procedures should be dealt with in 25 working days, although in certain cases this can be extended to 65 working days.

**Stage 3.** The third stage of the complaints process is the Review Panel.

**Where complainants wish to proceed with complaints about statutory Children and Young People's Services functions, the Council is required to establish a complaints Review Panel.**

**Where Stage 2 of the complaints procedure has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, s/he is eligible to request further consideration of the complaint by a Review Panel. As it is not possible to review a complaint that has not yet been fully considered at Stage 2, including providing the report(s) and adjudication to the complainant, it is essential there is no unnecessary delay in concluding Stage 2.**

**Review Panels are designed to consider whether the Council adequately dealt with the complaint in the Stage 2 investigation. They do this by:**

- **listening to all parties**
- **obtaining any further information and advice that may help resolve the complaint to all parties' satisfaction**
- **focusing on achieving resolution for the complainant by addressing the clearly defined complaints and desired outcomes**
- **reaching findings on each of the matters being reviewed**
- **making recommendations that provide practical remedies and creative solutions to complex situations**
- **supporting local solutions where the opportunity for resolution between the complainant and the Council exists**

- **identifying any consequent injustice to the complainant, where complaints are upheld, and to recommend appropriate redress and**
- **recommend any service improvements for action by the Council.**

**The Review Panel must be alert to the importance of providing a demonstrably fair and accessible process for all participants. Many complainants find this stage to be a stressful experience and it is important that the Panel is customer-focused in its approach to considering the complaint.**

**Complaints Review Panels are made up of three people:**

- **one Elected Member of the Standards Committee**
- **and two Independent Members (one from the Standards Committee and the other from the panel of Independent Persons, who chairs the hearing).**

**There are various timescales relating to stage 3 complaints. These include:**

- **setting up the Panel within 30 working days of the receipt of a request for a Review**
- **producing the Panel's report within a further 5 working days; and**
- **producing the local authority's response from the relevant Director within 15 working days of receiving the Review Panel's report.**

A further option for complainants is the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) who is empowered to investigate where it appears that a Council's own investigations have not resolved the complaint. Complainants can refer their complaint to the LGO at any time, although the Ombudsman normally refers the complaint back to the Council if it has not been considered under our procedure first.