

Coventry City Council People Directorate and Social Care Complaints Handling Guidance

Introduction

Coventry City Council is committed to putting local people and their needs at the heart of what it does. When things go wrong, it is important to make it right. Effective management and resolution of complaints, as well as learning from complaints, help ensure that Council services meet the needs of local residents and communities, and helps build a foundation of trust in order for the Council to have new conversations with residents, communities and partners to enable people to do more for themselves as active and empowered citizens. A key principle of this is continuous improvement, and this includes reviewing the Council's complaints processes and systems to ensure consistency and improve the way the Council serve the people of Coventry.

The Council's complaints policy is set out at www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/. It defines complaints as "any expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the Council or its employees, which the customer feels should have been provided". In addition to the corporate complaints process, there are statutory requirements for the Council to have a system for receiving representations made by or on behalf of children or an adult using social care services provided by / commissioned by the Council, arising from the Children Act 1989 and Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints Regulations 2009 respectively. The Council strives to act in accordance with best practice, set out in the National Complaints Managers' Group (May 2016) Good Practice guidance for handling complaints concerning adults and children social care services. Where possible, complaints should be resolved informally. If this is not possible, service users can formally complain to the Council.

Guidance

Corporate complaints	Adult social care complaints	Children's social care complaints
Formal complaint stages: two stages Stage 1: service investigation Stage 2: service investigation review	Formal complaint stages: one stage Stage 1: local resolution	Formal complaint stages: three stages Stage 1: local resolution Stage 2: investigation Stage 3: review panel
Timescales Acknowledgement: 3 working days Stage 1: 10 working days Stage 2: 20 working days	Timescales Acknowledgement: 3 working days Stage 1: 20 working days	Timescales (* maximum extension for complex cases) Acknowledgement: 3 working days Stage 1: 10 (to 20*) working days Stage 2: 25 (to 65*) working days Stage 3: 30 working days
Service areas Adult education, children's transport, education (except schools or education admissions appeals), housing options, HR/workforce/ICT/transformation (external only), libraries.	Service areas Adult social care.	Service areas Children's social care.
Recording of complaints On the corporate customer relationship management (CRM) system.	Recording of complaints On the corporate CRM system plus the social care complaints database.	Recording of complaints On the corporate CRM system plus the social care complaints database.
Reporting and learning from complaints Quarterly summary figures provided to and discussed at people leadership team; annual report on complaints to the LGO produced and upheld LGO complaints referred to the monitoring officer.	Reporting and learning from complaints Weekly progress reports and meetings held with senior managers, plus quarterly reports provided to adult social care management team and people leadership team, and annual report to the relevant cabinet member.	Reporting and learning from complaints Weekly progress reports and meetings held with senior managers, plus quarterly reports to children's services leadership team and people leadership team and annual report to the relevant cabinet member.

Escalation of corporate complaints
If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, and they consider that one or more of the following apply: relevant information was not taken into account in investigating the complaint; procedures have not been properly applied in handling the complaint; there has been an incorrect interpretation of Council policy, they can ask for the complaint to be reviewed via a service investigation review. The review will either be conducted by a senior manager of the service or, a senior officer or manager outside the line management of the service depending on the circumstances. The complainant will be expected to explain, in writing or verbally, the grounds for seeking a review.

Remedies, compensation and financial redress

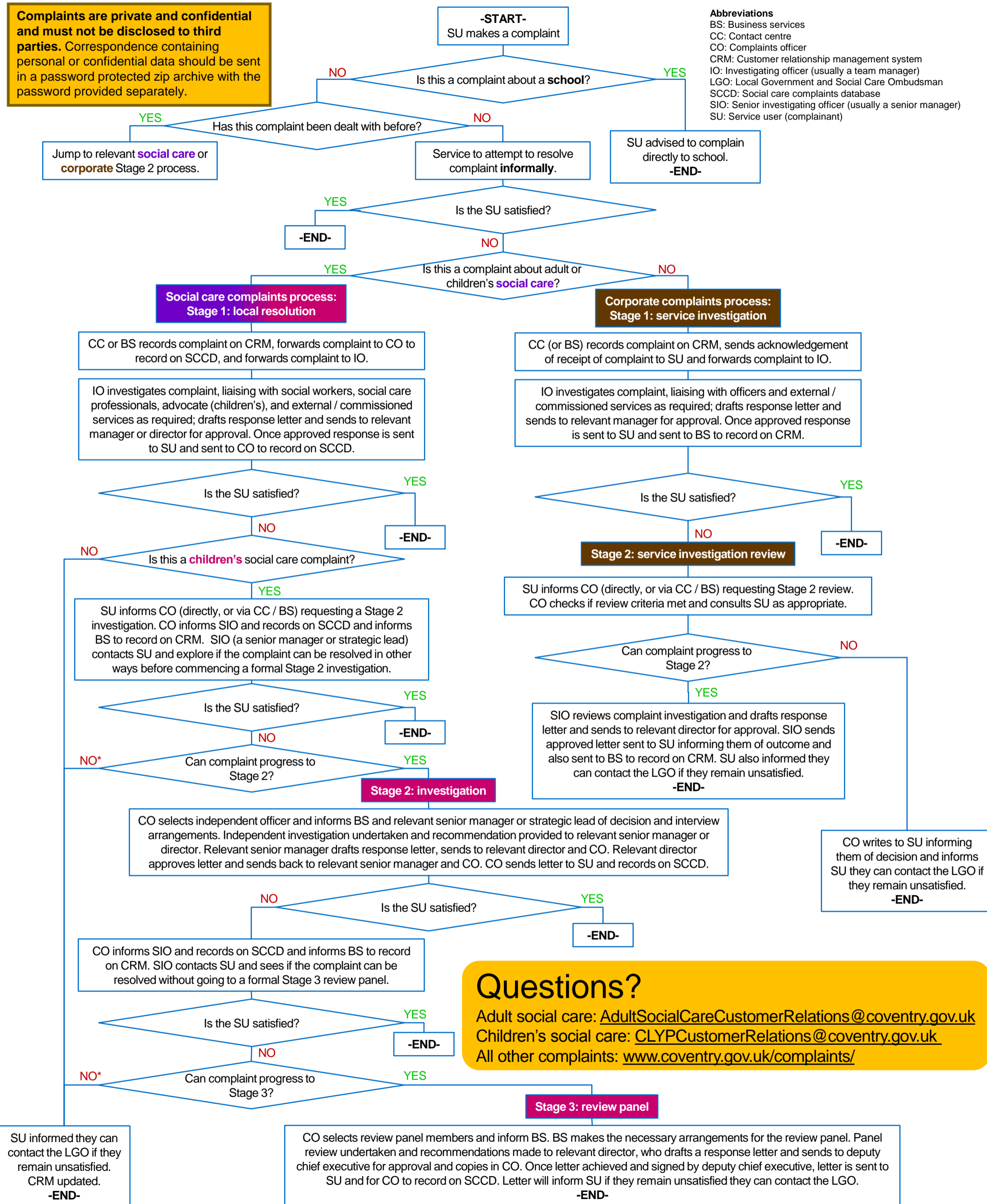
The key principle for any financial remedies paid is that a remedy should, as far as possible, put the complainant back in the position they would have been in but for the fault identified. Any financial redress should be agreed with the relevant director, in line with LGO guidance: <http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/advice-and-guidance/guidance-notes>

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO)

If a complainant is unhappy about the way the Council has dealt with their complaint, they can contact the LGO. The LGO would normally expect a complaint to be made within twelve months of when the complainant first knew of the problem that they are complaining about, and normally require all complainants to go through all stages of the Council's own procedure before considering the complaint. However, in certain circumstances the LGO has the discretion to waive this requirement. Note that a complainant can approach the LGO at any stage of the complaints process.

Escalation of children's social care complaints
In line with the Department for Education statutory guidance for local authority children's services on representations and complaints procedures, a complaint may be escalated to a Stage 2 investigation or Stage 3 review panel if a complainant wishes for it to do so. When this happens, a senior officer will always work with the complainant to see if the complaint can be resolved without escalation first.

Process Flowchart



Questions?
 Adult social care: AdultSocialCareCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk
 Children's social care: CLYPCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk
 All other complaints: www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/

* on rare occasions a complaint may not progress to the next stage, e.g. out of timescale

