

EVERY CHILD MATTERS



SALFORD CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CHILDREN'S SERVICES LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS

The government has made new rules for how we must deal with **Representations** from young people and their families. In other words how we must deal with your views.

A **Representation** can be

- A comment – telling us what you think
- A compliment – saying thank you or well done, or
- A complaint – telling us when you think we've done something wrong.

The government asked young people what would help them make their views heard.

Young people said:

- You should be able to make suggestions as well as complaints
- Your suggestions should be taken seriously, and you should be told what is done about them
- You should be able to talk to someone other than your carers about any worries
- You should be able to make complaints without your carers knowing about it
- Problems should be sorted quickly
- Someone independent should make sure that complaints are dealt with fairly
- If you are told that a change is going to be made, someone should check to make sure it happens.

The government used these ideas to help them write the new rules for **Representations**. These new rules came into force on 1 September 2006.



WHAT CAN YOU MAKE REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT?

You have the right to make a comment a compliment or a complaint about any service you receive including:

- Your care plan, including the plan for where you live, who you get to see and the support you receive.
- The way you are being cared for and the support you receive to help you sort out any problems you may have.
- The arrangements for looking after you if you live with: -
 - Foster carers or
 - In a children's home or
 - With members of your family.
- Anything you are unhappy about.



WHO CAN MAKE A REPRESENTATION?



- Any child or young person involved with Children's Social Care Services.
- Anyone who used to be in care.
- People who get adoption services.
- Their parent or carer.

In some cases, other people who care about what happens to you can make a Representation for you. This might be a friend or family member. If this happens we will ask you what you think about it before we do anything.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A REPRESENTATION

You can speak to your

- Foster Carer
- Residential Worker
- Social Worker
- Next Step Worker
- Your Advocate
- Family Placement Social Worker
- Family Placement Support Worker
- Teacher
- Learning Mentor
- Education Welfare Officer
- Youth Worker

Or write to:
TIM WHITTLE
Assistant Customer First Officer
Salford Children's Services
Minerva House
Pendlebury Road
Swinton
M27 4EQ

Or phone: **0161 778 0143** Or phone/text
07515 599 590

Or online at tim.whittle@salford.gov.uk
Or fill in a complaints form

COMPLAINTS

If you are unhappy about anything, you have the right to make a complaint. You can speak to any of the people listed on page 2. They will help you to sort out anything you are not happy about. If they can't sort it out you can make a complaint. Once your complaint has been received, you will receive a letter from the local authority to let you know your complaint is being dealt with. You will also receive a flow chart, which will indicate how your complaint will be handled.

COMMENTS

If you make a comment or a suggestion, you will receive a letter informing you what the directorate intends to do with your suggestion or comment. We might ask a manager to talk to you about it. We might ask if you want to help us to plan changes.

COMPLIMENTS

Most of the time, if you want to say thank you or well done you can do this face to face. If you live in a Children's home, you might have a book where you can write this down.

Sometimes you might want other people to know that someone has done a good job. You can contact us in any of the ways shown, and we will pass on your good wishes. We will also write back to let you know what we have done.



GETTING HELP

You can get help in making a complaint, a comment or a compliment from any of the people listed on page 2.

Any child or young person who wants to make a complaint also has the **right** to an advocate.

What is an Advocate?

An advocate is an adult who helps you to **make your views heard**. They can support you to speak up for yourself, or sometimes will speak for you.

Who are the Advocates?

You can choose who you want to be your advocate. It could be someone you know and trust. It could be:

- Someone in your family
- A carer
- A teacher
- A youth worker

Or somebody independent. You can contact **Salford Children's Rights Service** on 0161 743 0744 and request an advocate.

Do I have to have an Advocate?

No. Lots of young people are able to speak for themselves and don't need any help. It's up to you.



HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

First of all speak to your social worker, carer or advocate who will help you sort out any problems and deal with your concerns as quickly as possible. Most will be sorted out quickly. If they can't sort it out, or if you want someone else to deal with it we will follow these stages.

STAGE ONE

- If after speaking to your social worker, carer or advocate you feel your complaint has not been sorted out the person who has helped you so far will inform the local authority of your complaint. **Your advocate will be able to help you with the complaint process.**
- The Assistant Customer First Officer will write to you confirming that your complaint is being dealt with. The local authority has **10** working days to try and sort out your complaint.
- Sometimes it takes longer than **10** working days to sort out a complaint. If the local authority cannot provide you with a complete response within **10** days, it is allowed to have an additional **10** working days to provide you with a response.
- You should receive a response within **20** working days. If your complaint is sorted out you should receive a letter from the local authority confirming what action has been taken to sort out your complaint.
- If you do not receive a response within **20** working days, you or your advocate can request that your complaint be considered at Stage 2 of the complaints process.
- If you feel your complaint has not been sorted out you or your advocate can request your complaint be considered at Stage 2 of the complaints process.
- The local authority will check to see if staff have done what they said they would do to sort out your complaint.

STAGE TWO

- At Stage 2 a person who does not work for Children's Services will be asked to help the local authority sort out your complaint. These are called "**independent people**". An Investigating Officer is also appointed to help investigate your complaint.
- These Independent people don't know the staff or the managers. They have to be fair and treat everyone the same.
- They will talk to you and the staff. They will read files and log books.
- They will find out what the problems are and look for ways to solve them.
- You should receive a response from the local authority within **25** working days. (5 weeks).
- Sometimes investigations can take longer than **25** working days. If the independent people need more time to investigate your complaint, they can extend the investigation period by another **40** working days. You will be informed of any extensions to the time scale.
- You should receive a response within **65** working days. (3 months).
- A senior manager will send you a copy of the report prepared by the independent people with a letter telling you what Children's Services are going to do to sort out your complaint.

STAGE THREE

If you think that

- The report or letter at Stage 2 was wrong or had bits missing.
- The complaints procedure has not been followed, or
- Children's Services has not tried its best to sort out the complaint you or your advocate can ask for the complaint to go to Stage 3.

You have to do this within **4 weeks** of getting the Stage 2 letter. You have to put your request in writing giving the reasons why you are not happy with the outcome at Stage 2.

(The Assistant Customer First Officer or your advocate can help with this).

The local authority will write to you within **2 days** to say it has received your letter. The local authority then has **6 weeks** to arrange a **Review Panel**.

The review panel will be made up of three independent people. You will be informed of the panel's meeting date at least **10** days prior to the date and you will be invited to attend. You may wish to invite your advocate who will be able to support you through the meeting.

You will have the chance to ask questions too or your advocate can ask questions for you if you wish.

After the meeting, the panel will write a report to say what they think Children's Services needs to do to sort out your complaint.

The panel must produce its report within **5** working days. The Strategic Director of Children's Services will write to you within **15 working days** of receiving the report to say what she is going to do to sort out your complaint.

STAGE FOUR

If things are still not sorted, or if you are still unhappy, you can write to the Local Government Ombudsman:

Local Government Ombudsman
Beverley House
17 Skipton Road
York
YO30 5FZ

Advice line: 01904 380 200

Website: www.lgo.org.uk