



Durham SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

Complaint, Comment or Compliment Procedure

Introduction

This policy sets out the procedure to be followed when SENDIASS receives a complaint, comment or compliment from parents, carers, volunteers, or other users.

SENDIASS is committed to continually improving the support it provides, and considers any feedback received will be an opportunity to:

- Listen, review, respond and implement changes if necessary.
- Help shape future practice.
- Share best practice and celebrate achievements.

Comments and Compliments

These include:

- Thanking us for something that has particularly pleased you.
- Suggestions for improving the service.
- Telling us know that someone has gone over and above your expectations.
- Feedback on the service we have provided or the work we have done.

Comments or suggestions received will be passed onto the SEND IASS Coordinator for discussion and appropriate action.

Compliments received will also be passed onto the relevant person and their manager for their information and records.

Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet from someone about the SENDIASS which requires a response. It may include:

- Feeling disgruntled, disappointed, or unhappy.
- Feeling you were not treated with respect or courtesy, or an action, or lack of action by a SEND IASS worker that has led to you feeling anxious, worried, or concerned.

Complaints should relate to events which occurred within the last 12 months.

All complaints will be investigated in line with this procedure. The complainant will always be informed of the outcome of the complaint.

Outcomes may include:

- an explanation
- an apology
- practical action
- implementation of change specific to the particular complaint
- review of practice

Who can make a complaint?

A complaint can be made by:

- Any service user who has accessed SENDIASS including:
 - Parents
 - Carers
 - Children and Young people
 - Anyone working in partnership with SENDIASS
 - Volunteers
 - Professionals

Please note, this procedure is solely for complaints, comments and compliments about the service received from County Durham SENDIASS. It does not apply to the actions or decisions of an individual or organisation outside of the service.

How do I make a complaint, comment, or compliment?

You will need to put any complaint, comment, or compliment in writing in via:

- an email
- a letter

Is there an alternative to making a formal complaint?

Yes

Misunderstandings can often be sorted out on an informal basis.

You can contact the SENDIASS Coordinator who will aim to resolve the issue informally.

If the issue is not resolved, the formal complaints procedure can be started.

County Durham SENDIASS Formal Complaints Procedure

Complaints may be received through Durham County Council complaints procedure <https://www.durham.gov.uk/complaints> or directly through the SENDIAS service.

The complaints process consists of two stages:

Stage 1 Response from SENDIASS Coordinator

Stage 2 Review by Durham County Council Children & Young People's Complaints Officer

Stage 1 Response from SENDIASS Coordinator

- The complaint is sent to the SENDIASS Coordinator
- A letter to acknowledge the complaint is sent within 3 working days.
- If the complaint is about the SENDIASS Coordinator, the procedure will start at Stage 2.
- A full investigation into the circumstances surrounding the complaint will be carried out by the SENDIASS Coordinator.

This may involve:

- Talking to people concerned
- The person who has complained will receive a written response letter explaining how the complaint investigation has been conducted.
- The outcomes of the investigation and any actions to be taken.
- The person who has complained will be informed that they may request a Stage 2 complaint if they are still dissatisfied.
- A complaint will be responded to within 20 working days.
- In exceptional circumstances where a complaint will take longer than 20 days to investigate the person who has complained will be informed of this and the date by which they will receive a response.

Stage 2 Investigation or review by the Durham County Council Children & Young People's Complaints Officer

All requests for Stage 2 investigation must be in writing to the Durham County Council Children & Young People's Complaints Officer.

This must be within 20 working days of the Stage 1 response letter and specify why the person complaining remains dissatisfied and what outcomes are being sought.

An acknowledgement letter will be sent to the person complaining within 5 working days.

The Durham County Council Children & Young People's Complaints Officer will:

- Review the complaint.
- Make sure all relevant information has been considered.

A Stage 2 complaint may take the form of an investigation or mediation.

Mediation

Mediation may be offered to help resolve the complaint. This will involve all the relevant parties meeting to discuss the complaint and agreeing a way forward to help resolve the complaint.

Investigation

An investigation will involve the Durham County Council Children & Young People's Complaints Officer reviewing any initial investigation of the complaint to provide an independent and objective view.

This will involve contacting the complainant.

- To clarify the complaints and desired outcomes
- If the outcomes sought cannot be achieved through the complaints procedure this will be explained and where possible an alternative route provided.

A full response will be sent to the person who has complained within 20 working days.

This will include.

- How the complaint has been investigated
- Their findings
- Outcomes and recommendations/actions to be taken.

In exceptional circumstances where an issue is complicated and will take longer than 20 days to investigate

- the person who has complained will be informed of this
- and the date by which they will receive the outcome of the investigation.

The Durham County Council Children & Young People's Complaints Officer's decision will be final.

A record of discussions and decisions will be kept.

Recording and Monitoring Arrangements

Records of all complaints, comments and compliments will be

- kept on a confidential system. A copy of the confidentiality policy is available from County Durham SENDIASS
- reported to and discussed at the SENDIASS Steering Group meetings.

For Stage 1 complaints

County Durham SENDIASS Coordinator
Lee House
Lee Terrace
Easington Village
Co. Durham
SR8 3AB

sendiass@durham.gov.uk

For Stage 2 complaints

CYPS Complaints Officer
Children and Young Peoples Services
Durham County Council
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UQ

cascomplaints@durham.gov.uk

Date of review: September 2023
Date of next review: September 2024