

Stoke-on-Trent
SENDIASS

Complaints Procedures
2026



Complaints Procedure

Content

- Introduction
- Making a Complaint
- Stage 1
- Stage 2
- Stage 3
- Stage 4
- Monitoring.

Introduction

The procedure sets out the steps we will take when we receive a complaint from service users, an organisation/agency or member of the public. It does not address complaints made by staff or volunteers (dealt with through Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures), nor job applicants (Recruitment Procedure).

Making a Complaint

Recording and Monitoring Complaints

When a service user wishes to complain about the Service, the following procedure should be adopted. The complainant should be given a copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure, and invited to complete the Complaints Form attached. If the complainant does not wish to, or is unable to put the complaint in writing, a Verbal Statement of Complaint shall be accepted.

Verbal complaints concerning waiting or opening times will be treated as informal and therefore outside the scope of this procedure, although a record may be kept for monitoring purposes.

Stage 1

The complainant should be invited to speak to the Service Team Lead to discuss the complaint with them. This can be done in person or by phone and the Team Lead should keep a record of the conversation on the Complaints Monitoring Sheet.

At this stage all possible attempts should be made to resolve the complaint on the same day and in any event as soon as practicable after the complaint is made. The outcome shall normally be given in writing, except for informal complaints as described above and the outcome should also be detailed where appropriate. The Team Lead shall be available to explain the outcome verbally should a complainant wish. The complainant should be informed of the next stage of the complaints procedure should they remain dissatisfied.

Stage 1: should be completed within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.

Stage 2

a) A complaint must be made in writing, either by letter or on the Complaints Form available from Stoke-on-Trent SEND Information Advice and Support Service Office base or via email.

A member of a family wishing to make a complaint should be assisted appropriately, ensuring they feel comfortable to raise and express the complaint.

Staff must not refuse to accept a complaint.

b) The letter or the completed Complaints Form, should either be sent or handed in to Stoke-on-Trent SEND Information Advice and Support Service Office base or sent to IASS@stoke.gov.uk inbox.

c) On receipt of the complaint, the Team Lead shall acknowledge receipt of it, and shall send a copy to the Head of Access, Governance and School Services (LA). If the complaint is a letter, attach a Complaints Form and complete details on the form. A Record of Complaint Form should also be started and given the same Complaint Number.

d) The Team Lead shall consider what steps are appropriate in responding to the complaint; these may include problem solving, conciliation and/or negotiation. The Head of Access, Governance and School Services be informed of the proposed response and shall agree to it or discuss alternative responses with the Team Lead. A response to the complainant should be given without delay and the expectation is that this stage of the Procedure should be completed in most cases within two weeks.

e) The details of the response and the outcome of the way in which the complaint was considered shall be recorded with the written complaint.

f) Written responses must be sent in all cases to the complainants. Further information shall be included in the written response, outlining the further steps in the Procedure, which can be taken if the response is not satisfactory to the complainant.

If the complainant is satisfied with the outcome, no further action need be taken as far as the complainant is concerned.

Stage 3

If the complainant is not satisfied or wishes from the start when making the written complaint to have it more formally considered, the following procedure shall apply:

a) On receiving a reply to the response that it does not satisfy the complainant, or on receipt of the written complaint that the complainant wishes to go straight to this stage, the Team Lead shall acknowledge receipt of the reply or of the written complaint, send a copy to the Steering Group Chairperson and record the date it was received.

b) The Strategic Manager decides who shall further investigate the complaint independently. Depending on the nature of the complaint and its seriousness, they may be joined in the investigation by another member of the LA or Steering Group.

c) A written report of the independent investigation shall be made and recorded with the written complaint and a copy sent to the Strategic Manager.

d) A further response to the complainant shall be drawn up taking into account the report of the investigation and shall be made in writing by the Strategic Manager to the complainant.

e) If the complainant is satisfied with the result of the investigation and the further response, no further action need be taken as far as the complainant is concerned.

Stage Three shall be completed within four weeks of the commencement of the Stage.

Stage 4

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response drawn up after the investigation, the following procedure shall apply:

a) The continued dissatisfaction of the complainant should be submitted in writing and should be recorded. If sufficient reason for the dissatisfaction is not included in the written paper, more details of the reasons should be sought from the complainant and recorded.

b) A Special Meeting should be called. Each member shall receive a file of all the written papers concerning the complaint. The Head of Access, Governance and School Service and those engaged in the investigation shall attend for the purpose of reporting and giving information but, in the interests of natural justice, shall leave the meeting before any decision is taken. In these circumstances, the Chair for the meeting should be taken either by the Vice Chairperson or another person elected for the purpose.

c) A written response shall be drawn up as a result of any decision taken at the Special Meeting by the person who Chaired the meeting and that response shall be recorded with the written complaint and sent to the complainant.

d) The Special Meeting shall be called within four weeks of the commencement of this Stage and the response shall be sent to the complainant within one week after the meeting.

Monitoring

All complaints will be recorded and kept on digital file. The Team Lead will make a report once a year to the Strategic Manager for Inclusion Services and Steering Group summarising the nature of complaints received and how they were resolved.

This marks the end of the Complaints Procedure and if the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should be informed by the Team Lead of any other separate procedure, which may be appropriate to the case.