

Making a Complaint

If you are unhappy about the service you have received from Adoption Counts we would like to hear from you to see if we can put things right. We seek to be a learning organisation and so learning when something has gone wrong and doing something about it is important to us.

Here's what you can do:

The informal stage:

If there are aspects of the adoption service with which you are not satisfied you should discuss this, in the first instance, with your supervising social worker or the member of staff you have had most contact with. They should listen to your concerns and try to resolve the problem. If the complaint is about that member of staff please ask to speak to a Manager, or contact the Regional Adoption Manager at our contact address.

The formal complaints process:

If you are not satisfied by the informal response then you can your complaint further.

If you are a child, or your complaint is on behalf of a child, then you should contact the local authority which has responsibility for that child. The local authority will be responsible for handling your complaint as it retains responsibility for the welfare of each adopted child. Most issues can be resolved speedily and effectively through informal discussions with the child's social worker or the supervising social worker, depending on the particular issue. However, if you are not satisfied with their response you can contact the Complaints section of the relevant local authority by clicking on one of the links below.

Stockport <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/general-complaints>

Manchester http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200025/complaints_comments_and_questions/67/complaints_compliments_and_suggestions/2

Salford <https://www.salford.gov.uk/your-council/have-your-say/complaints-comments-or-compliments/>

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http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/customer-services/complaints_and_feedback/complaints_and_feedback.aspx

Trafford <http://www.trafford.gov.uk/about-your-council/complaints/complaints.aspx>

If you are an adopter, prospective adopter or birth parent, or you wish to complain about a service provided by Adoption Counts, you should make the complaint to Stockport Council which is the lead agency for Adoption Counts and which will investigate all complaints about Adoption Counts.

You can make your complaint by clicking here <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/general-complaints> or by writing to Devon Sherwood at Stopford House, Piccadilly, Stockport.

Complaints can be made in writing, in person and by telephone helpline.

Whilst the Formal Complaint Process will be slightly different depending on which local authority you contact, the complaints process in each local authority follows a similar pattern.

Stage 1

The complaint will be forwarded to the Manager with responsibility for the services provided to the child. The Manager will consider the complaint and provide a response to you and the child (if appropriate), including what will be done to resolve the complaint and any learning the service will adopt as a result of the complaint. The Manager may arrange to visit you and the child (if appropriate) to discuss the complaint.

Stage 2

If after receiving the response to Stage 1 you and / or the child remain dissatisfied, you can ask that the complaint be progressed to stage 2. At this stage the complaint will be investigated further by someone who is independent of the adoption service. They will produce a report for the Service along with any findings of the investigation and any recommendations that might serve to resolve the complaint. A Senior Manager within the adoption service will also write to you and the child saying what will be done to resolve the complaint.

Stage 3:

If after receiving the response at stage 2 you and / or the child remain dissatisfied you can ask for the complaint to be considered by an independent Review Panel. A Review Panel

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makes decisions about the complaint, and may make other recommendations for the adoption service to think about. At Stage 3, a Service Manager has to respond to the Review Panel's decision and any recommendations.

Following the stage 3 Review Panel, if you are still dissatisfied you have the right to make representations to the Local Government Ombudsman (see contact details below).

For adopters who are dissatisfied with decisions made by the Agency Decision Maker.

Decisions to approve Adopters are taken by a person called the Agency Decision Maker who considers a recommendation made by the Adoption Panel. If you are a prospective adopter and wish to make a complaint about a decision made by the Agency Decision Maker or a recommendation of the Adoption Panel, in the first instance you should contact the Agency Decision Maker in writing within 28 days of receipt of the decision. If it is possible to resolve the disagreement the agency will try to do this. You can ask to return to panel for further discussion, either the panel which made the recommendation or another panel.

If you are still dissatisfied at the outcome you can ask for a review by the **Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)**, a panel independent of the adoption service. This is not an appeal process. If you decide to refer to the Independent Review Mechanism, they will receive all the appropriate reports and you will be invited to attend the IRM panel and make representations. The panel will be able to review recommendations made by the adoption service but the Agency Decision Maker will make the final decision.

You can contact them at <http://www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk/>

The only circumstance where you cannot ask for a review by an Independent Review Panel is if you are disqualified from adoption or have been cautioned for an offence.

Should the complaint not be resolved to your satisfaction you then have the right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman. The contact details are as follows:

PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH
Phone: 0300 061 0614
www.lgo.org.uk