

Complaints process

If you are unhappy with the way in which your personal budget assessment was handled, or the outcome, the first action to take would be to take this up with the worker in question or their manager. If this is unsuccessful you will need to follow the formal complaints process as set out below.

Step one: Norfolk County Council Complaints Team

You can make a complaint in any of the following ways:

- By telephone on 0344 800 8020
- Online at www.online.norfolk.gov.uk/complaints/ and filling in their online form
- In writing to: Compliments and Complaints Manager, FREEPOST IH 2076, Norwich, NR1 2BR

It is strongly recommended that you put your complaint in writing rather than telephone, and keep records.

When writing the complaint, you should keep the following in mind:

- Be clear that this is a complaint (e.g. you can start the letter by stating that you wish to make a formal complaint)
- Keep it as brief as possible, and keep to the point. You may find it useful to list the issues.
- Once you have written about the issues, state what you would like to achieve. You should be realistic with this (i.e. your outcomes should be fair and proportionate to the issues).
- You should detail how the Complaints Case Manager can contact you to resolve the complaint
- Provide any necessary evidence to support your complaint
- Remember to be firm but polite.

Once the complaints team has received your complaint, they will contact you to let you know it has been received, and will give you a time frame for how

long they expect it to take to be allocated to a Complaints Case Manager. Once allocated, the Complaints Case Manager will contact you to let you know, and will give you a timeframe for how long they expect it to take to investigate your complaint. You will then receive a formal response to your complaint.

Step two: Escalate at Norfolk County Council

If you are unhappy with the response you received from Norfolk County Council you should write back to them and explain why you feel their response is unsatisfactory, and again state what outcome you would like to achieve. You will then receive a further response from the Complaints Case Manager.

Step three: ombudsman

If the second response from Norfolk County Council's Complaints Team does not resolve your complaint, the next and final step in the complaint process is to escalate to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). They can usually only accept complaints made about an event that has happened in the last twelve months. There may be occasions when they will consider older complaints (e.g. if there are extenuating circumstances which have delayed the complaint). Their role is to check whether or not the Council are at fault (e.g. whether a process has been followed correctly). They cannot comment on the morality of a decision. They also cannot deal with complaints contesting whether a policy is legal. Should your complaint require legal advice you should seek advice from a solicitor.

To submit a complaint to the LGO you can contact them in the following ways:

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Online: http://lgo.org.uk/forms/ShowForm.asp?fm_fid=62

In writing: The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry CV4 0EH

It is, again, recommended that you make the complaint in writing if possible so that you can keep record of the complaint. You should try to keep the letter as succinct as possible, and cover the main points of your complaint. You should also state how you would like the complaint resolved. It would also be useful to send copies of all complaints letters, responses and any supporting evidence. The LGO also find it useful for you to include details of how you prefer to be contacted.

Initially you will receive an acknowledgment that your complaint has been received and that the LGO are considering whether they can take your complaint on. If they accept your complaint, they will then contact you to let you know who has been allocated. Your allocated worker will contact you to discuss your complaint in more detail if needed, or just to let you know how long they expect to take in considering your complaint.

They will conduct a thorough investigation, and seek further evidence from the Council, and you as necessary. Once they have considered all of the evidence they will produce a draft decision. The draft decision will set out how the Ombudsman has come to their decision, what the decision is, and any recommendations they wish to make. This will be sent to both you and the Council along with any evidence the Ombudsman asked the Council to supply. You will be given a set timeframe to make any comment on the draft decision before the Ombudsman makes the final decision. A copy of the final decision will be sent to you.