

Help for complainants with different needs

In line with our Equality and Diversity Policy, we aim to provide the same ease of access to our services for all complainants.

People with disabilities (physical, sensory, communication, and learning), people whose first language is not English, and people who cannot read very well may have difficulty using our service in the normal way. The following alternative arrangements are available for complainants who need them.

Requests for other assistance can also be considered where this is necessary to enable proper consideration of the complaint. All these arrangements are subject to the availability of resources. We will review our arrangements on a regular basis, and welcome feedback, suggestions and comments on our approach.

Complainants who need alternative arrangements should tell the investigator who is dealing with their complaint.

Assistance available to people whose first language is not English

- **Translations:** Correspondence between us and the complainant can be translated into other languages. Translations can also be provided for standard materials such as our leaflets and other key documents (eg council responses to the complainant).
- **Interpretation:** Telephone interpreters are available through our LGO Advice Team service – call 0300 061 0614 for details. Interpreters can also be engaged for interviews between us and the complainant. It is preferable that as much advance notice as possible is given of the need.
- **Meetings:** Consideration will be given to holding a meeting to discuss the complaint, with an interpreter present, to help reduce the need for correspondence.

Sex

Where the sex of an investigator is an issue, we will consider arranging for same sex staff to conduct interviews and may consider reallocating a case.

Assistance available to people who have difficulties with written materials

This might include people who are blind or partially sighted. It would also include people who have learning disabilities or have limited reading skills.

- **Braille transcriptions:** This service can be provided for correspondence between us and the complainant, and for standard information materials.
- **Large print:** This service can be provided for correspondence between us and the complainant, and for standard information materials.
- **Voice recordings:** All correspondence between us and the complainant, and standard information materials, can be provided as a voice recording. This can be supplied either by email, or on CD. Our leaflet and some standard information materials are available on CD.

Assistance for people who are deaf or hard of hearing

We can arrange to conduct interviews using Text Relay (formerly Typetalk, see www.textrelay.org/ for details), by internet exchange or we can engage sign language interpreters, either in person or through video conferencing. **We recognise that there are several types of sign language interpreters.**

Assistance for people with dyslexia

We can produce correspondence on cream paper and change the layout of typed materials – for example, changing the type size and/or altering the line spacing and line length – for people who find our normal style difficult to read. Please discuss specific requirements with the investigator dealing with the complaint.

Assistance for people with mobility difficulties

The reception areas and interview rooms at all our offices are wheelchair accessible. 'Off street' parking is available at York and Coventry. There are some designated disabled

parking spaces at our London office, but they must be pre-booked with our investigator. Maps are available detailing public access, including access for people with disabilities.

Most interviews are carried out by telephone or at the complainant's home. Where another venue needs to be chosen for an interview, and the complainant would have difficulty in travelling to our offices because of a physical disability, a venue with suitable access and convenient for travelling by the complainant will be arranged.

Our approach to advocacy

Some complainants may encounter difficulty in assembling or considering the written material associated with their complaint, because of a communications problem or learning disability. We may be able to meet with such complainants if this would be helpful in addressing their difficulties.

We will help to put the complainant in touch with voluntary or charitable bodies who may be able to help; in some cases it may be possible and appropriate to obtain help from a local authority keyworker.

Social services authorities have a duty to provide an advocate for children who complain and to offer assistance to an adult complainant on the use of the statutory social services complaints procedure, or to provide an explanation of where assistance can be obtained.¹ Authorities may be willing to extend this assistance to include complaints to the Ombudsman.

We will consider funding advocacy for people in need of them, who cannot obtain funding from elsewhere, sufficient to enable proper consideration of the complaint.

An organisation called 'Counsel and care', which provides advice and help for older people, has a fact sheet about Independent Advocacy for older people on its website (see: www.counselandcare.org.uk/pdf/independent-advocacy-guide-25), and another on where to find further information which includes contacts for some organisations which can provide advocates. See www.counselandcare.org.uk/category/advice/pdf/information-other-useful-organisations-guide-24

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