



How we respond to complaints involving Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Our approach:

At Telford and Wrekin Council we recognise that making a complaint to an organisation that is seen to be in authority can be really challenging process for survivors of CSE, especially given the potential for the complaint to re-traumatise complainants.

With this in mind we want to make our complaints process accessible to survivors and provide reassurance that complaints will be handled in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

Where survivors require support or assistance with regard to the process and substance of their complaint, the Customer Relationship team will appropriately signpost them to available advocacy services. Please see a list of services that we will refer customers too at the end of this document.

It should be noted at the outset that those who are, or have been, victims of sexual abuse (which includes sexual exploitation) have the legal right to a greater level of confidentiality than others. This means that details will not be shared with anyone else except as absolutely needed to deal with the complaint.

Given the historical nature of many of these potential cases, and the outcome of the inquiry, complaints will be registered regardless of the time period that has passed provided that they relate to the time period that Telford and Wrekin Council has been in existence 1 April 1998.

Any decisions and responses in relation to complaints will be retained in accordance with retention time scales for corporate complaint records which is 6 years, however where there is a children's social services file the decision will be retained in accordance with children's file retention which is 25 years and will be destroyed at the same time that the children's file is destroyed if that is longer than 6 years.

Complaint Procedures:

Complaints involving CSE will be responded to under one of the two complaint procedures that are available for these matters.

- The Children's Statutory Complaints procedure introduced by the Children's Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 was created for some cases involving children's services. However, not all involvement of the Children's Safeguarding and Family Support Service is covered by the statutory complaints procedure.
- In cases not covered by the statutory procedure, the complaint will be responded to under the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure. This procedure is open to everyone who has been directly affected by the actions or decisions on the part of the Council in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

Where a complaint is received regarding a partner agency where there are no elements that require a response from the Council, the complaint will be recorded by the Customer Relationship team, this information will be retained in accordance with retention time scales. The Customer Relationship team will seek permission from the complainant to pass the complaint to the relevant person who has the responsibility for managing complaints for the other agency. The Customer Relationship team will also advise the complainant that they can share these concerns directly with other agencies themselves, signposting details will be provided.

In cases where there are elements for the council a response will be provided to the elements of the complaint relating to council services.

The Complaint Process:

All complaints registered under the corporate procedure should be acknowledged by the Customer Relationship Team within 2 working days of receipt. Please note that a complaint registered under the statutory complaint procedure should be acknowledged within 2 working days.

The Customer Relationship Team will set out its understanding of the complaint and confirm the outcomes that the customer is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the complainant will be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.

A full response should be sent within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged and will outline the complainants right to request that the complaint is considered at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure. This request should be made by the complainant within 20 working days of receiving the response to their concerns.

Where an investigation is unlikely to be completed within 10 working days. The Customer Relationship Team will send an update informing the complainant of the extended response date, which should then be completed within 20 working days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation at Stage 1, and requests that the complaint be investigated to Stage 2, the Stage 2 complaint investigation will be considered by the Senior Formal Complaints Investigator, who is a member of the Customer Relationship team and independent from corporate services. Under the corporate procedure a response will be issued in 20 working days up to a maximum of 40 working days.

In the case of complaints involving actions and decisions involving CSE, the Customer Relationship team may source an Independent Investigator and/or an Independent Person to have oversight of the investigation at Stage 2 of the corporate procedure.

The investigation report will be shared with the Director of Children's Safeguarding and Family Support who will provide a response to the findings.

Any complaints registered under the statutory procedure are required to be considered by an Independent Investigator and Independent Person at Stage 2 of the procedure. A response will be issued within 25 working days up to a maximum of 65 working days.

In some cases the Complaints Manager may feel that it is appropriate for the complaint to immediately be investigated at Stage 2 of the procedure, complainants will be advised if this is the case. In most cases, it is desirable and possible to resolve complaints promptly, with the minimum of formality and as close as possible to when they arose.

The response at Stage 2 of the corporate procedure will outline the findings and will also outline the complainant's rights if they remain dissatisfied with the response. This will include the contact details for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Under the statutory procedure if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 of the procedure they can request a Stage 3 panel, which includes an Independent Chair and Independent Panel members, who will consider any outstanding concerns following the Stage 2 and make recommendations where appropriate. Complainants will be supported through this stage of the procedure.

Activities undertaken in relation to complaints involving the actions and decisions relating to CSE will be reported annually as part of CSE data reporting.

This document has been created to outline the councils approach to complaints involving CSE but should also be considered alongside the full complaint procedures which can be found on our website at [Complaints procedures - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

Advocacy and Support Services

Organisation	Website/ email	Telephone
Telford and Wrekin Information, Advice and Support Service	www.cyp.iassnetwork.org.uk/service/telford-and-wrekin-iass/ Info@iass.org.uk	01952 457176
Children's Commissioner's Advice Service	www.help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk	0800 5280 731
Safeguarding Shropshire Children	www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk	0808 8005 792
The Children's Society	www.childrensociety.org.uk supportercare@childrenssociety.org.uk	0300 303 7000
Pohwer	www.powher.net / pohwer@powher.net	0300 456 2370
ECPAT	www.ecpat.org.uk	
Migrant Help	www.migranthelpuk.org	
Barnardos	www.barnardos.org.uk	
CORAM	www.coram.org.uk	
The Holly Project	www.hollyproject.org info@hollyproject.org	01952 947 831