

Your right to complain : how to use the Council's complaints service / Islington Council ; illustrated by Deborah Brill.

Contributors

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your right to complain



— How to use
the Council's
complaints
service

ISLINGTON  **COUNCIL**

Introduction —

Islington Council sets itself high standards so that you can enjoy high quality services.

This is crucially important where people's lives can depend on the personal help and support they receive.

That is why we try hard to improve services all the time. But we can't do this on our own. We need your help.

When we make mistakes, fail or refuse a service you think you should get, you need to let us know. Your views matter to us.

We also want to hear your suggestions, concerns or difficulties. That way you can positively help us give you a better service.

Usually it is possible to sort out most problems on the spot with one of our local managers. But if that doesn't work please use our formal complaints system.

that is your right.

help us to help you.

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Making a general complaint —

stage one: informal approach

Here's the way to get your complaint dealt with.

The first step is to try to resolve any difficulty informally with the local manager responsible for the service. Most problems can usually be settled at this level.

If your complaint involves a service provided by one of Islington's neighbourhood offices, talk to the appropriate local service manager concerned.

For example, if about a swimming pool, refuse collection, street lighting, pavements or a library, talk to the local manager. Our information service on 071 477 3130/1 can give you the right contact if you're not sure.

The next step —

stage two: written complaint

If an informal approach does not solve the matter then you should make a formal written complaint.

Write to the Neighbourhood Manager for services provided by a neighbourhood office (see list at back of this leaflet) and for any other service write to the local manager.

We will acknowledge it within 48 hours and give you a written reply within 20 working days.

In a few cases where complaints are very complicated, we may need longer. We will explain the reasons for any such delay and say when you can expect a full reply.

Stage three: review

If you are not satisfied with the response from the Neighbourhood Manager or department – or you have heard nothing within 20 working days from sending your letter – you can complain in writing directly to the Council's Principal Complaints Officer at the town hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD (071 477 3007).

You may want a friend, someone from the Council or a voluntary organisation to help fill in the complaint form. A list of advice organisations is included in this leaflet.

If you need translation services or are visually impaired, the Council can help. Please let us know.

Note: The time limits are the same for all complaints whatever the service involved.

For some services the complaints procedure is slightly different, for example, education cases or those involving the Community Care Act and the Children Act. But they still follow three steps as for general complaints.

Education —

For complaint about your child's education at school or in an under fives centre, get in touch with the headteacher and try to resolve the matter informally as a first step.

For informal complaints about colleges, the Council's education department or other services, contact the member of staff or senior person at the place concerned and ask for a meeting.

After discussion, the head, principal or a senior officer will write to you to explain what action will be taken about your complaint and also what steps you can take if you are not satisfied with the outcome, including making a formal complaint.

Making a formal complaint

Formal education complaints have three stages.

Stage one – Under this stage you raise your complaint with the governing body of the school or college.

Stage two – If you are still not satisfied, you should write within 20 working days to the Council's education department at Laycock Street, N1 1TH (071 457 5790) who will arrange for your complaint to be sent either to the education inspectorate for complaints on curriculum matters or an assistant director for other complaints.

Stage three – Lastly, if your complaint is still not resolved, you can write to the Council's Principal Complaints Officer who is based at the town hall (see contact list for address and phone number). This request has to be made within 20 working days of getting a stage two decision.

He will arrange for your complaint to be considered by the education committee complaints panel.

This consists of three councillors from the education committee who will meet to consider your complaint. Their decision is final as far as the Council is concerned but you do have the right to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

Note: The Council has no power to investigate complaints about religious education and worship in voluntary (church) schools. Here you should write to the clerk of the governing body at the school.

Community care —

Complaints about community care – or community living as Islington calls it – concern services for older people and those with physical or learning disabilities, people who are deaf or blind and those with mental illness or who have drug or alcohol problems, or those who have HIV or AIDS.

Stage one – With community care cases the law sets out a procedure for formal complaints. But the pattern is much the same – you follow stage one to try to resolve things informally. This will involve the appropriate officer at the neighbourhood office.

Stage two – If you still think your complaint has not been dealt with properly, then go to stage two by writing to the Neighbourhood Manager.

Stage three – If you are still not satisfied you can take your complaint a step further to stage three by asking the Council's Principal Complaints Officer to arrange for your complaint to be reviewed – this request has to be made within 20 working days of getting a stage two decision.

The complaints officer will arrange for a panel to be set up consisting of two elected councillors and one independent person who chairs it.

The panel will review your complaint impartially and make sure that you are treated fairly.

Children Act —

The Children Act also contains a legal right to complain. Under the Children Act a person independent of the Council must be involved at *every* stage of a *formal* complaint.

Stage one – If the complaint is an *informal* one, however, we will do our best to resolve problems through our neighbourhood services department at the point where the problem arose. Contact the Neighbourhood Officer (social services) or the Neighbourhood Manager concerned.

Stage two – Anyone raising a complaint has the right to go straight to the *formal* stage by writing to the Neighbourhood Manager. The investigation at this stage will always involve an Independent Person.

The complaints can be from:

- a child who is being looked after or has been looked after by the authority (or who may be “in need”)
- a parent, or local authority foster parent, or someone with parental rights
- a person the Council believes has an interest in the child's welfare.

A complaint can also be about a Council service in relation to a child.

Where practicable, the Council will always check with the child that a complaint put in on their behalf reflects their views.

Stage three – As with the procedure for community care mentioned above, you have the right to take a complaint to stage three by asking the Council's Principal Complaints Officer to have your complaint reviewed by a Panel chaired by an Independent Person.

Again, you have 20 working days in which to make this request from the time the stage two decision has been given.

There's more than one way to complain —

You have the right to go directly to the nationally appointed Local Government Ombudsman for complaints about any of the services described in this leaflet. Contact through your local elected councillor or write direct to: **The Ombudsman**

21 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1 9BU
(071) 222 5622



complaints form

Please fill in this form if you wish to make a complaint about any of the services that the council provides.

Help us to improve our services by giving us as much information as possible.

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(071) 609 8647

Contacts for advice —

Clerkenwell Citizen's Advice Bureau

119 St. John Street
London, EC1V 4QQ
(071) 253 2155 (or 253 0768 for those who are disabled and live south of the Angel)

Highbury Citizen's Advice Bureau

326 St. Paul's Road
London, N1 2LF
(071) 359 0619

Holloway Citizen's Advice Bureau

Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way, London, N19
(071) 272 5577

Islington Disablement Association

90-92 Upper Street
London, N1 ONP
(071) 226 0137 (for people with physical difficulties)

Elfrida Rathbone Committee

34 Islington Park Street
London, N1 OPN
(071) 359 7443 (for people with learning difficulties)

Islington Education Advice Shop

Block i, Barnsbury Park
London, N1 10G
(071) 457 5785

Islington Mencap

404 Camden Road
London, N7 OSJ
(071) 607 3232/8762

Pensioners' Link

6-9 Manor Gardens, N7 6LA
(071) 263 7690

complaints

Please use block capitals (Black Ink)

1. Your name _____

2. Your address _____

3. Telephone number Home _____

Work _____

4. Which service/department/neighbourhood office are you complaining about? _____

5. What is your complaint? _____

6. Did you speak to anybody in the council about your complaint? If so, to whom and when? (Please send copies of correspondence if available) _____

form

Please take this form to the place where
your complaint first arose.

7. What response did you get? _____

8. Why are you dissatisfied with the response? _____

9. What do you think the council should do to put things right?

10. Signature _____

Date _____

For office use

Age Concern

424 St. John Street
London, EC1V 4NJ
(071) 278 6994

North Islington Law Centre

161 Hornsey Road, N7 6DU
(071) 607 2461

South Islington Law Centre

131-132 Upper Street, N1 IQP
(071) 354 0133

National Children's Bureau

8 Wakley Street EC1V 7QE
(071) 278 9441

National Association of Young People (NAYPIC)

20 Compton Terrace, N1 2UN
(071) 226 7102

Royal Institute for the Deaf

South East Region
1 Malet Street, WC1E 7JA
(071) 436 3908

Royal Institute for the Blind

224 Portland Street, W1N 6AA
(071) 388 1266

Principal Complaints Officer

Islington Council
Chief Executive's Office
Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD
(071) 477 3007/3268

Don't forget to use Islington Council's information service on (071) 477 3130/1 if you need more advice.

ISLINGTON'S NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICES

Archway

4 Vorley Road, N19 5JH
(071) 281 1371

St Johns

85-88 Holland Walk, N19 3XS
(071) 263 6412

Beaumont Rise

17-23 Beaumont Rise, N19 3AX
(071) 272 7731

Hanley

51 Hanley Road, N4 3TH
(071) 281 4361

Irene Watson

299 Hornsey Road, N19 4HB
(071) 281 1291

St Georges

2-4 Tufnell Park Road, N19 0DL
(071) 281 2451

Tufnell Park

243 Junction Road, N19 5YA
(071) 281 2401

Durham Road

86 Durham Road, N7 7DU
(071) 263 9602

Gillespie

102 Blackstock Road, N4 2BX
(071) 226 3553

Sobell

50 Isledon Road, N7 7LP
(071) 607 9023

Clocktower

36 North Road, N7 9TU
(071) 700 4101

Rosedale

1 Lowther Road, N7 8SL
(071) 609 9293

Drayton Park

52d Drayton Park, N5 1NS
(071) 354 5999

Quadrant

95a Sotheby Road, N5 2UL
(071) 354 5666

Highbury

60 Highbury New Park, N5 2DX
(071) 226 7226

Julie Curtin

65-79 Boleyn Road, N16 8LB
(071) 254 5561

Canonbury East

68 Halliford Street, N1 3RH
(071) 226 0096

Canonbury West

30 Arran Walk, N1 2YJ
(071) 354 5548

Upper Street

173-174 Upper Street, N1 1XS
(071) 354 3666

Cally

1 Lyon Street, N1 1DQ
(071) 609 2211

Calshot

57 Calshot Street, N1 9XH
(071) 278 9133

St Peters

38 Devonian Road N1 8UY
(071) 226 2520

Finsbury

86 Central Street, EC1V 1PY
(071) 251 1661

Clerkenwell

1 Garnault Place, EC1 1YP
(071) 278 6453

