



## How the Stage 3 Adjudicator will deal with your complaint

The Stage 3 Adjudicator (S3A) is the final stage of the Council's complaint process.

The S3A considers complaints about the Council's administrative actions. The S3A will not question what actions the Council has taken simply because someone does not agree with them. But if the S3A finds something has gone wrong, and that a person has suffered as a result, the S3A aims to get it put right by recommending a suitable remedy.

### ***Does the S3A investigate every complaint received?***

No. The S3A starts by reviewing the information you have provided, and the complaints file. Sometimes this provides enough information to reach a decision on the complaint. Or the S3A may decide that the person complaining has not been significantly affected by what happened, or could appeal to a tribunal instead. If the S3A is not going to investigate your complaint, they will let you know quickly, and will usually suggest if there is another organisation which could help you.

### ***How does the S3A investigate a complaint?***

The S3A may do some or all of the following

- Talk to you about your complaint
- Look at the relevant policies and procedures
- Examine records and files
- Interview officers
- Visit the site.

The S3A considers both sides of the complaint and may find fault if the organisation involved

- Made a mistake
- Took too long to do something
- Did not follow its own rules or the law
- Treated you unfairly
- Broke its promises
- Failed to meet expected standards of service
- Gave you wrong information
- Did not tell you that you had a right of appeal against a decision
- Took a decision in the wrong way, such as:
  - not taking all the relevant information into account
  - taking into account irrelevant information, or
  - not following its own procedures properly.



The S3A then considers how this fault affected you. The S3A may find that you were affected personally if you

- Did not get a service or benefit that you should have had, at the time you should have done
- Suffered financial loss
- Suffered a lot of avoidable expense, trouble or inconvenience.

The S3A can also look to see if the things that went wrong for you are part of a wider service failure that might affect others.

### ***How long does it take?***

The S3A usually acknowledges a complaint within 2 working days, and issues a final decision to you and to the Council within 30 working days of receiving the complaint. The S3A will let you know if the investigation will take longer.

The S3A will not normally tell the Council what to do during this period. The Council should continue to deal with matters in the usual way, so if things are still going wrong, it is important that you tell officers.

### ***What recommendations can the S3A make?***

The S3A might ask the organisation to:

- Apologise to you
- Make a payment to you
- Carry out repairs
- Take action, provide a service, or make a decision that it should have done before
- Reconsider a decision that it did not take properly in the first place
- Improve its procedures or conduct staff training so that similar problems do not happen again to you or anyone else.

The S3A's recommendations are binding.

### ***Can I complain about the S3A's decision or how they dealt with my case?***

The S3A is the final stage of the complaints procedure. If you remain dissatisfied you can pursue your complaint with the Ombudsman.

You can Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman at [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk) to make a complaint online. If you need help to do this, you can contact them by phone on 0300 061 0614 – opening hours Monday 10am to midday, Tuesday to Friday, 10am to 4pm (except public holidays).

