COMPLAINTS

Resolution Ready

Stage 1 response checklist

Ten things a good stage 1 response to a Children Act 1989 complaint contains. Use it before the response is signed off. It reflects the statutory guidance, Getting the Best from Complaints, and what stage 2 investigations and stage 3 panels most often find missing.

1. **It answers the complaint the person actually made** ☐
   Each element of the complaint as the complainant put it is dealt with. Nothing is reframed into something easier to answer.

2. **It was acknowledged within two working days and answered within ten** ☐
   Where the ten working day limit was extended to twenty, the complainant was told why and when to expect the response.

3. **It says what happened, from the record** ☐
   Dates, decisions and who did what, taken from the case file. Where the record and the complainant differ, the response says so.

4. **It says what should have happened** ☐
   The standard the service is measured against: the statutory guidance, the procedure, the plan, or the assessment that applied at the time.

5. **It reaches a finding on each element and gives the reason** ☐
   Upheld or not upheld, with the reason in a sentence or two. Partially upheld and no finding are best avoided. Reach a clear finding wherever the evidence allows.

6. **It apologises where something went wrong, in plain words** ☐
   A specific apology for the specific failing. Not a general regret that the complainant feels as they do.

7. **It says what will change and by when** ☐
   Actions with an owner and a date. Learning that stays general does not answer a complaint.

8. **It is written to the complainant, in their language** ☐
   Plain English, no jargon, no acronyms without explanation, and no copying of internal case notes into the letter.

9. **It explains the right to go to stage 2, and how** ☐
   The route to an independent investigation is set out plainly, with the timescale for asking and who to contact.

10. **The child or young person has been considered** ☐
    Where the complainant is a child, an advocate has been offered. Where the complaint is about a child, their views and interests are visible in the response.