



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Things you might want to know about making a complaint

### 1. Will I need to talk to people to make a complaint?

Yes, in most cases you will. Even if you don't phone up and you make a complaint online or send in a written complaint, someone from our team will want to talk with you about your complaint. We will ask you some questions about what has happened and find out more about how you think the problem can be fixed. We can meet with you, skype you or just talk to you on the phone, however feels best for you. We will make sure you are safe and have support and can also link you to the Advocate for Children in Care at <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/advocate-children-care> to support you with your complaint if you choose. It might feel a bit scary or weird to talk with people who you don't know about your life but talking about your complaint to people who have not been involved up until now is a good start to making sure those already involved, listen to you closer. If it is difficult for you, a support person can help you or make the complaint for you (see question 2).

### 2. Can someone make a complaint for me?

Yes, they can. You can ask a support person to make a complaint for you. Support people may be your family, friends, carers or people significant to you, maybe a worker from CREATE Foundation ([create.org.au](http://create.org.au)) or a teacher at your school. We will listen to them and think about the problem and how to fix it. We will try to talk with you and your support person together. Speaking out about things that affect you is a good thing to learn to do because it can help you in the rest of life. We know it can be scary or uncomfortable and we will try to make it as easy as possible for you to speak out and be listened to.

### 3. What sort of things do young people make complaints about?

Everyone's life is different and so the things that young people are worried or concerned about will be different too. Many complaints are about decisions that have been made by case workers about a young person's life that they do not agree with. If it is important to you and you want something fixed or changed then it is good to speak out or we won't know how you feel about decisions that affect you. Making a complaint is one of the ways to make sure people are listening to you.



## Speak Out. Be Heard. Get Support.

**Some complaints young people have made...**

**My placement has had to change again, and I do not want to change schools because I am used to where I am and have friends at my school.**

(Shaylah, 13 years)

**I really need my teeth fixed as they are really embarrassing for me and I get picked on because of them. I have been told I have to wait for the free dentist and it's taking too long.**

(Dom, 12 years)

**I want to spend more time with my whole family not just my mum but my cousins and other family members. I have been told that this is not possible due to transport issues, distance to some of my family and my safety. I don't think this is fair or think I am in any danger and transport is not my problem, there should be a way for me to see all my family more.**

(Thomas, 15 years)

**I want to stay over at my friends from school like everyone else, my case worker says that each time the family must be assessed first, which is embarrassing and not how normal kids live.**

(Renaë, 14 years)

**My carer is not giving me any pocket money, so I can buy my own things or gifts for my friends and family. I should have some money of my own.**

(Amelia, 8 years)

## 4. Are there things I can't make a complaint about?

You can make a complaint about anything that you are unhappy or worried about and tell us your ideas of how the problem can be fixed but there are a few things that the complaints team cannot change for you. These are care plan decisions or the decisions that the judge at a court might have made about you and your family. What we will do is make sure that you have had your rights and your views considered. There are other ways to have these types of decisions looked at again, especially if you feel you have not been included and your views and wishes have not been considered properly.

## 5. What will the complaints team do with my complaint?

Making a complaint is a good starting point to share your views on how the problem can be fixed. The complaints team can help you fix your complaint by talking to your case manager and their supervisor about your complaint or problem. This will give them a chance to talk it through together and include you in trying to fix the problem.

A lot of people might talk to their case manager first and many problems are solved this way. You might have already tried this, and you don't think you got a good outcome. You also might not get on well with your case manager or think that things might go better if there is someone else to help who is not part of the problem. The Advocate for Children in Care (<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-communities/advocate-children-care>) can help you in this situation too and the complaints team will figure out with you what you think will work best and who you would like to be involved.

We will work with you to decide the best way to have your complaint fixed and talk with you about who will work on your complaint and how long it will take.

## **6. What will happen if I make a formal complaint?**

A formal complaint means the Director of your district has 21 work days, so about four weeks, to work out what's gone wrong for you. They will arrange for someone to talk with you about your complaint and will also speak to your case manager and their supervisor to find out more about the problem and to think about ways the problem can be fixed. You will get a written letter at the end of the complaint process telling you the outcome and how the problem can be fixed. If you think things are still not fixed or explained fairly to you, you or a support person can get back in touch with the complaints team to discuss this. We may investigate your complaint further if you are unhappy with how the district responded to your complaint.

After the district and the complaints team have responded to your complaint, if you are still unhappy, someone outside the Department can look at your complaint further. The people that can help with this are at the Ombudsman of Western Australia: [www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au).

**For further information or to lodge a complaint, please contact the Complaints Management Unit at the Department of Communities.**

**Phone: 1800 333 325**

**[www.communities.wa.gov.au/complaintschildreynyoungpeople](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/complaintschildreynyoungpeople)**