

How to challenge effectively

"But that's not right!" Autscope 2026

How to challenge effectively – be informed

- Check whether the organisation has published any policies which are relevant to your issue
- Check whether there is any national guidance relevant to your issue
- If you find guidance, check whether it is **statutory (legally enforceable)** guidance. To do this:
 - Is it published by the government or by someone else? (if someone else it is not statutory guidance, but may still be useful to quote)
 - If it is published by the government, does it say **statutory** (or the equivalent word in your country)
- See if you can find out anything about the law about the issue
 - Try major charities/other voluntary sector organisations/user groups and/or googling for guides
 - Make sure the source you are looking at is a reliable source (not just something someone said on social media!)

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As well as the specific “rule book”, there are also Equality/Discrimination laws in many countries

- These are likely to cover government/state organisations
- They often cover businesses and other organisations as well
- They rarely cover individuals speaking/acting in their private life unless they break criminal laws
- These can help to protect minority groups – which can often include people with disabilities (which may well include autism)
- You do not always need a formal diagnosis in order to be protected
- How strong these laws are and how easy they are to enforce varies between countries and between different areas of life

E.g. in the UK it is much easier to enforce discrimination law in Employment cases than in other areas of life

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There are also more fundamental rules that apply to decisions made by government/state organisations

1. Human Rights
2. Public Law principles – apply in common law jurisdictions around the world
 - These include fundamental issues of:
 - Being fair
 - Being reasonable
 - Not being biased[Quite often the sorts of issues that trigger that autistic sense of justice!]
3. Constitutions – vary between countries but are mostly written and have specific courts that protect those rights (except in the UK!)

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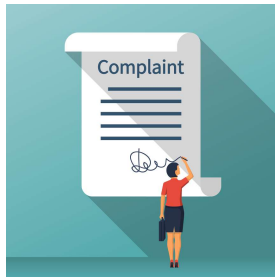
How to challenge effectively – admin

- Don't delay – check the time limits
- Ensure you are complaining to or about the right organisation – check who is responsible and the correct address to send any letter/message
- Do it in writing – use post, email or an online form (resist doing it by phone or any other format where there is not a record in your possession!)
- Make sure that it is logged. Get a receipt or some form of acknowledgement (e.g. proof of posting, recorded delivery)
- Keep a record – keep copies of everything you send, note the date and time of everything you do



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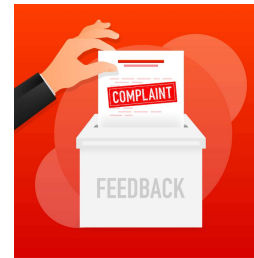
How to challenge effectively – writing the complaint/challenge – 7 golden rules



1. Make sure they know it's a complaint or challenge to their decision - clearly state you are making a complaint
2. Focus on the most important issue(s) and state exactly what the decision is that you disagree with – a maximum of 3
3. Start from scratch – don't assume they have read anything or know anything about what has happened

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How to challenge effectively – writing the complaint/challenge – 7 golden rules

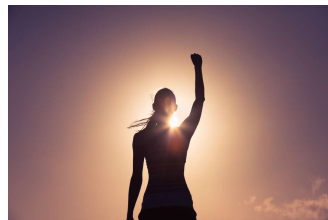


4. Explain clearly what you think they got wrong and quote the best thing that supports your position (e.g. a sentence from an assessment report, a paragraph of statutory guidance, the section of law they have broken – say where it is from)
5. Tell them specifically what you want them to do to put it right (e.g. apology, change the decision)
6. Set a time limit (follow their policy/any rule book, otherwise 28 days is usually reasonable)
7. Keep it brief!

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Tips for helping yourself cope if you do fight

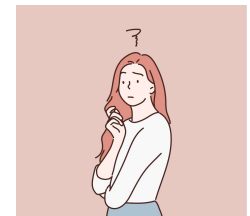
- Set boundaries and figure out ways to protect them e.g. not taking on fights for people beyond immediate family; using intermediaries or separate email addresses; time limited sessions working on your challenge (if you can manage that!)
- Increase your support e.g. plan additional down/recovery time, extra emotional support etc.



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Tips for helping yourself cope if you do fight

- Recruit a sounding board – a friend who can be objective and:
 - Help you focus on the most important issue(s)
 - Tell you when what you want isn't realistic
 - Tell you if you are overestimating your chances of success
 - Warn you if they think the fight is really getting too much for you
- Remind yourself that you are not responsible for fixing everything that is wrong in the world!



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