



CHEEVERSTOWN

A FUTURE WHICH EMPOWERS PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL
DISABILITIES TO REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL AND LIVE A GOOD LIFE.

TITLE OF DOCUMENT:

Cheeverstown Complaint Policy & Procedure

This document is a:

Policy ☒

Procedure ☒

Protocol ☐

Guideline ☐

Approved by:	Cheeverstown Leadership Team
Developed by:	Quality Manager
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While this document may be printed please note that the electronic version on the [\\w2k12-file\ctppolicies](#) folder is the only version that is maintained. Any printed copies should therefore be seen as uncontrolled and may not contain the latest updates.

List of sections changed:	Version:	Date Approved:	Author:
	4	Sep 2025	Fiona Shanahan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full Review in line with the HSE 'Your Voice Your Say' Policy• Revised Complaint Form to encompass management of the complaint• Removal of the Complaint received Form			

Responsible person for implementation: All staff in Cheeverstown

Implementation Plan:

- Policy to be saved in \\w2k12-file\CTPolicies\Schedule 5 Policies and Time Point
- An organisational-wide email will be sent to inform colleagues that the policy has been updated
- The policy will be highlighted to new colleagues at induction to the service

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CHEEVERSTOWN HOUSE COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
Board of Cheeverstown House CLG

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Mr. M. Kennedy • Mr. M. McMahon • Mr. R. Mellon • Mr. M. Power • Ms. A. Vaughan •



Contents

Part 1. Policy Section	3
1. Policy Statement.....	3
2. Policy Purpose.....	3
3. Legislation/Regulations/Standards	4
4. Scope of Policy	4
4.1 Complaints Timeframe & Exceptions	5
4.2 When a Complaint May Not Be Investigated.....	5
4.3 Responding to Challenging or Unreasonable Behaviour	5
5. Confidential Recipient.....	6
6. Definitions.....	6
7. How complaints can be made	7
8. Roles and Responsibilities.....	7
9. Redress.....	8
10. Appeals to External Bodies	8
11. Audit.....	9
12. Annual Report to the HSE	9
Part 2 Procedure Section	10
1. Introduction	10
2. Procedure for Managing Complaints	11
Step One: Point of Contact Resolution (Local Resolution).....	11
Step Two: Formal Investigation Process.....	12
Step Three: Internal Complaint review	13
Step Four: Complaints referred to external agency/Independent review	14
3. Compliments and Feedback	15
Appendix 1: Cheeverstown Complaints Process.....	16
Appendix 2 Summary of Complaints Procedure	17
Appendix 3 Cheeverstown Complaint Form	23
Appendix 4: Complaints Narrative Form.....	26
Appendix 5: Compliments Narrative Form	27
Appendix 6: Staff Guidance on the Management of Complaints.....	28
Appendix 7 Complaints Log	31



Part 1. Policy Section

1. Policy Statement

At Cheeverstown, we are committed to delivering high-quality, person-centred services and continually improving those services through active listening and engagement with the people we support, their families, advocates, visitors, and the wider community.

We welcome all feedback including comments, compliments, concerns and complaints as a vital source of learning and service enhancement.

Cheeverstown's feedback and complaints process reflects the HSE's *Your Service, Your Say* policy and is underpinned by the following principles:

- **Accessible:** Our process is easy to understand and use, for everyone, including people with disabilities, children, and those with communication support needs. (In line with the person's communication matrix support)
- **Person-Centred:** Each individual is respected and supported to raise issues without fear of repercussion
- **Fair & Transparent:** Complaints are managed consistently and impartially, and complainants are kept informed
- **Timely & Responsive:** Complaints are acknowledged promptly and resolved efficiently where possible
- **Learning & Improvement:** Every piece of feedback is a chance to improve our services, systems and enhance staff knowledge

Our goal is to build a culture of openness and trust where feedback, positive or negative, is actively encouraged, taken seriously, and used to improve the care and support we provide.

2. Policy Purpose

This policy provides a clear and structured framework for managing feedback and complaints in line with *Your Service, Your Say* and relevant legislation.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Enable the people we support, their families, carers, advocates and members of the public to provide feedback about their experiences with Cheeverstown.
- Ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly, respectfully and in a timely manner, and that complainants are kept informed and supported throughout the process.
- Promote a learning culture where complaints and feedback are used to inform continuous quality improvement and accountability.
- Ensure that people are aware of their right to bring complaints to an independent third party (e.g. the Ombudsman or Ombudsman for Children) if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

We aim to ensure that no person will be adversely affected as a result of making a complaint, and that all complaints are managed in a manner that is sensitive, person-centred and aligned with best practice and legal requirements.



3. Legislation/Regulations/Standards

Cheeverstown is committed to ensuring that its complaints and feedback process meets all legal and regulatory requirements and reflects national standards of best practice.

This policy is informed by the following legislation and guidance documents:

- Health Act 2004 (Complaints) regulation 2006 SI No. 652 of 2006
- Child Care Act, 1991 & Related Regulations
- Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons (Children and Adults) with Disabilities) Regulation 2013
- National Standards for Residential Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities January 20
- Ombudsman Act 1980 & Amendments 1984& 2005
- Disability Act 2005
- The Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002

This policy is also aligned with the HSE's national complaints policy, *Your Service, Your Say*, and Cheeverstown's commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of every person we support.

4. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to any person who wishes to share feedback, raise a concern or make a complaint about the services provided by Cheeverstown.

This includes:

- People who use our services
- Their families and advocates
- Visitors
- Members of the public
- Staff who are raising a concern on behalf of people we support

This policy covers:

- Any aspect of service delivery that is perceived to be unsatisfactory, unfair, unsafe or inconsistent with best practice
- Issues raised by or on behalf of people using services, including children and adults with disabilities

This policy does *not* cover:

- Matters relating to safeguarding or protection concerns (these are managed under our Child Protection and Adult Safeguarding Policies)
- Complaints related to internal HR matters, such as staff grievance or disciplinary issues
- Clinical judgment matters (e.g. a professional's decision in the context of care)
- Legal issues already under investigation or litigation
- Issues outside the timeframe (see below for exceptions)



We are committed to ensuring that people feel safe and supported when raising concerns, and that the scope of what we can respond to is clearly explained from the beginning.

4.1 Complaints Timeframe & Exceptions

In line with the Health Act 2004, complaints should generally be made within 12 months of the issue occurring. (Section 47, Part 9 of the Health Act 2004).

However, we understand that there are valid reasons why someone may need more time. The Complaints Officer may extend this timeframe in certain circumstances, such as when:

- The person was unwell, bereaved, or otherwise vulnerable at the time
- New, relevant information has come to light
- The issue is serious and in the public interest
- The issue relates to systemic concerns or human rights

4.2 When a Complaint May Not Be Investigated

There are some situations where a complaint may not be investigated. This may happen if:

- The complaint does not relate to a service we provide (section 46, Health Act 2004)
- It has already been investigated through another formal process (e.g. legal proceedings)
- The complaint is vexatious, malicious, or not made in good faith
- The matter has already been resolved
- The person making the complaint is not entitled to do so under relevant legislation (section 46 (3) or (4) Health Act 2004)
- The complaint is made after the expiry of the period specified in (section 47(2) Health Act 2004) or any extension of that period allowed under (section 47(3) Health Act 2004)

If we are unable to investigate, we will:

- Explain clearly and compassionately why the complaint cannot be processed through this policy
- Signpost the person to any other relevant bodies or supports (e.g. Ombudsman, safeguarding, legal)
- Every person will be treated with respect, and every concern will be acknowledged

4.3 Responding to Challenging or Unreasonable Behaviour

We recognise that people often raise complaints when they are distressed, frustrated, or feeling let down. We will always seek to understand and support the complainant. However, in rare cases where behaviour becomes unreasonably persistent, aggressive, or abusive, we will;

- Treat the person with dignity and fairness while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of staff and others
- Make every reasonable effort to resolve the issue compassionately and constructively
- If necessary set respectful boundaries or limit communication in line with best practice



5. Confidential Recipient

Cheeverstown supports the rights of all people to speak up, particularly where concerns relate to the safety, dignity, or wellbeing of vulnerable adults or children.

To further support this, the HSE has appointed an independent Confidential Recipient for Vulnerable Persons. This person can receive information from:

- People using services
- Family members or carers
- Concerned members of the public
- Staff members

The Confidential Recipient is independent, listens to concerns in confidence, and helps to raise issues directly with the appropriate service. This role is especially helpful if someone does not feel safe or able to raise a concern through regular channels.

We will support anyone who wishes to contact the Confidential Recipient.

You can contact the Confidential Recipient:

*National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities,
National Office,
Level 3 Rear Unit
Marshalsea Court
Merchant's Quay
Dublin 8
D08 AEY8*

6. Definitions

To ensure everyone understands this policy, we have included clear definitions below:

What is a Complaint?

The Health Act 2004 defines a complaint as “any action of the executive or a service provider that, it is claimed does not accord with fair or sound administrative practice; and adversely affects the person by whom or on whose behalf the complaint is made”.

What is a Complainant?

A complainant is any person who is being or was provided with a service from Cheeverstown, or who is seeking or has sought provision of such a service. A complainant is also a person who is directly affected by the service Cheeverstown provide.



7. How complaints can be made

At Cheeverstown, we believe that every person has the right to be heard, the right to be respected, and the right to feel safe when speaking up. We actively encourage feedback and complaints from:

- People who use our services
- Families, carers and advocates
- Visitors and members of the public
- Staff, raising concerns on behalf of a person

We know that giving feedback or making a complaint can feel difficult, especially if someone has had a negative experience. Our commitment is to make this process as easy, respectful, and supportive as possible.

Ways to Give Feedback or Make a Complaint

You can make a complaint or share your views by:

- Talking to any staff member in person
- Phoning us
- Sending an email
- Writing a letter
- Completing a complaints form (available from any staff member or online <\\w2k12-file\ctlibrary\Library\Complaints\Cheeverstown Complaint Form.dotx>)

Children wishing to make a complaint

It is the policy of Cheeverstown to ensure that children of sufficient age, reason and understanding are encouraged and supported to provide feedback or to make a complaint about any aspect of the service they have received from Cheeverstown. Their feedback and, in particular, their complaint will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately.

Children and their families are made aware of the right to complain to the Ombudsman for Children or to have the outcome of their complaint reviewed by the Ombudsman for Children. Under the Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002, the Ombudsman for Children may accept complaints directly from children or person acting on behalf of the child up to and including 18 years of age.

The welfare of the child is paramount at all times and when the recipient of a complaint from a child or person acting on behalf of the child is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of the child, that person will ensure that they act appropriately in the best interest of the child and to appropriately implement Children First Policy.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities underpin the effective implementation of this Policy. It is the role and duty of all management and staff to:

- Comply with this Policy



- Ensure that this Policy is implemented and adhered to in their area and that the rights and legitimate interests of people we support and staff are protected
- Promote a culture and attitude that welcomes feedback and supports the effective and timely resolution of complaints received
- Ensure that information on how to provide feedback and on how to make a complaint is accessible and made widely available throughout all Cheeverstown locations
- Provide an efficient, effective, fair and accessible system for handling people feedback
- Support the person and staff in the implementation of the Policy and supporting guidance
- Collect data and monitor feedback for the purpose of improving the quality of service delivery

9. Redress

An effective complaints system which offers a range of timely and appropriate remedies will enhance the quality of service for people who we support. It will have a positive effect on staff morale and improve Cheeverstown relations with the users of the service. It will also provide useful feedback to Cheeverstown and enable it to continue to be a learning organisation by reviewing current procedures and systems which may be giving rise to complaints.

Redress should be consistent and fair for both the complainant and the service against which the complaint was made. Cheeverstown offer forms of redress or responses that are appropriate and reasonable where it has been established that a measurable loss, detriment or disadvantage was suffered or sustained by the claimant personally.

This redress could include:

- Apology
- An explanation
- Refund
- Admission of fault
- Change of decision
- Replacement
- Repair /rework
- Correction of misleading or incorrect records
- Technical or financial assistance
- Recommendation to make a change to a relevant policy
- A waiver of debt

10. Appeals to External Bodies

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaints management process, he/she may seek a review of the complaint by the Ombudsman/ Ombudsman for children.

The complaints officer or representative will advise the complainant of their right to seek an independent review from the Ombudsman/Ombudsman for Children at any stage of the complaint



management process. Cheeverstown will cooperate with the independent body and pass on all the relevant documentation to conduct an independent complaints review.

11. Audit

In order to develop a system of complaint documentation, all complaints will be noted on the Cheeverstown Complaints Form (Appendix 3).

Cheeverstown complaints form will be held in a separate complaints folder held either by the location (for Stage 1 complaints – Point of Contact Resolutions local issues), Department Manager or Complaints Officer as appropriate.

The folder will be audited on a monthly basis by the person in charge/manager or their designate to ensure local complaints are resolved to a person's satisfaction in a timely manner.

The Department Manager will take responsibility for the action plan and learning derived will be used as a source of learning to enhance the local service and improving quality.

12. Annual Report to the HSE

Cheeverstown will provide the HSE with a report on the complaints received by the service on a quarterly basis using the template as issued by the Consumer Affairs Division.



Part 2 Procedure Section

1. Introduction

Cheeverstown is committed to ensuring that feedback, comments, compliments and complaints from those using our service is acknowledged, reviewed, acted upon and responded to and that learning derived from this feedback informs our quality improve programmes.

A complaint may be received by any member of Cheeverstown staff who must then determine the most appropriate process for dealing with the complaint.

All Cheeverstown staff have a responsibility to accept any complaint received by them and to endeavour to manage and resolve the complaint at the point of contact or, where more appropriate, to refer the complaint to the appropriate area for management.

Effective handling of feedback is fundamental to the provision of the quality of service. The following process will support an effective and efficient feedback management as outlined in. *Your Service, Your Say*





Confidentiality and Disclosure

Complainants must be assured that their complaint and their personal details will be treated in confidence to the greatest extent possible consistent with the right to privacy. Complaints information required for reporting and statistical purposes will be anonymised and all identifiable data will be removed. However, where the screening and /or investigation of the complaint indicates that there is a requirement to disclose some or all of the details of the complaint e.g. there is evidence of abuse that must be reported in accordance with both Cheeverstown Adult and Child Protection Policies the complainant will be informed immediately and the information will be directed to the appropriate personnel.

2. Procedure for Managing Complaints

When a member of staff receives a complaint, whether verbal or written, the following procedures apply.

Step One: Point of Contact Resolution (Local Resolution)

These are straightforward complaints which will be suitable for prompt management and to the person we support satisfaction at the point of contact.

Respond immediately and appropriately to the complainant. The person/complainant can write a letter/ email, or use the Cheeverstown complaint form (Appendix 3) or staff can document the complaint/concern on the person's behalf.

Acknowledge receipt of the complaint as quickly as possible and in any case within 2 working days.

All verbal or written complaints should be completed using the Cheeverstown complaints form (Appendix 3).

On receiving a complaint, if it's a local issue staff will try to resolve the concern at point of contact and will document the complaint in the local complaint folder. This will include details of the complaint made and any resolutions agreed with the complainant.

Staff will inform their direct manager and maintain a log of issues resolved at local level. (Appendix 7)

If the concern is unresolved escalate to the line manager who will make a plan to resolve the complaint.

Some complaints that are sensitive in nature or may have been reported directly to the manager will be recorded in the manager's complaints folder ensuring it details all efforts to resolve the issue and communications with the complainant.

Complainants will receive verbal feedback which is to be recorded on the house complaints log. In some situations a written response may be required.



When the complaint is successfully resolved it will be noted on the house complaints log. Documenting of complaints will include: details of the complaint, an accurate record of the complainant's concerns, a record of staff responses to the complaint, a record of the steps taken to resolve the complaint, and a record of the outcome of the complaint and if the person is now satisfied.

A copy of the complaint is not to be included in the persons file.

If not resolved, or if the issue is more serious, it is then escalated to Stage 2.

Step Two: Formal Investigation Process

Unresolved complaints at stage 1 may need to be referred to the complaints officer or a senior manager where appropriate. More serious or complex matters may need to be addressed immediately under stage 2. There may be a need for an investigation and actions as appropriate.

The Senior Manager or Complaints Officer must consider whether it would be practicable, having regard to the nature and the circumstance of the complaint, to seek the consent of the complainant and any other person to whom the complaint relates to finding an informal resolution of the complaint by the parties concerned.

Where informal resolution was not successful or was deemed inappropriate, the Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will initiate a formal investigation of the complaint.

The Senior Manager or the Complaints Officer is responsible for carrying out the formal investigation of the complaint at stage 2 but may draw on the appropriate expertise/skills etc. as required. Staff have an obligation to participate and support the investigation of any complaint where requested.

The Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will decide if the complaint is appropriate to be investigated under the Complaints Procedures.

The Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint verbally and in writing within 5 working days.

The Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will inform the complainant in writing, within 5 working days of making the decision/determination, if the complaint will not be investigated and the reasons for it.

The Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will meet with the complainant and may organise to have a member of staff present. The complainant will be advised that he/she can bring another person to the meeting. The Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will ascertain the key issues for the complainant and what they would like to see happen as a result of the investigation. He/ she will inform the complainant of the steps involved in the investigation and what the complainant may



expect from the investigation. It is important to acknowledge the distress of the complainant without accepting liability on behalf of the organisation.

The Senior Manager or Complaints Officer may seek consent from the complainant to review charts, files or other written records, if appropriate.

The Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will complete the investigation and inform the complainant of the outcome in writing within 30 working days of receiving the complaint.

If the investigation cannot be investigated and concluded within 30 working days then the Senior Manager or Complaints Officer must communicate the delay and update every 20 working days.

At the end of the investigation, the Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will write a report of their investigation and give a copy of the report to the complainant, to the manager of the relevant service. The report will include: A description of the actions taken, an apology when things went wrong, and an explanation as to the action taken to prevent a reoccurrence.

The final report will include any recommendations needed to resolve the matter. The Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will invite everyone involved to contact them with questions about any issues and will advise the complainant of their right to a review of the recommendations made by the Senior Manager or Complaints Officer.

Where the investigation at Stage 2 fails to resolve the complaint, the complainant may seek a review of their complaint from the Review at Stage 3 or the complainant may seek an independent review of their complaint from, for example, the Ombudsman/Ombudsman for Children.

If the complaint is resolved at this stage, the Senior Manager or Complaints Officer closes the complaint file. This file will not be held as part of the services user's file; but instead will be retained by the Complaints Officer.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout all stages of the investigation to the greatest extent consistent with the requirements of fair investigation. The rights of all parties will be respected throughout each stage of the investigation process.

Step Three: Internal Complaint review

The aim of these policies is to ensure that complaints are satisfactorily dealt with by Cheeverstown managers and complaints officer. However, in circumstances where the complaint has not been resolved to the persons satisfaction the person will be advised that they can request an internal review.

A request for an internal review must be made in writing by the complainant within 30 working days of the investigation report being sent.



In Cheeverstown an internal review will be completed by the Director of Operations and Service Development or Complaints Officer.

The complainant may choose to go directly to the Office of the Ombudsman, Ombudsman for Children, or other professional bodies to whom the complainant could make an application for review.

The Review Officer will:

- Issues an acknowledgement letter to the complainant within 5 working days
- Engage with the Complainant as appropriate throughout the review process
- Determine the appropriateness of the recommendations by reviewing the processes used to investigate the complaint and having regard to all aspects of the complaint and its investigation
- Uphold, vary or make a new recommendation
- Complete the review within 20 working days. A Review Officer may request in writing an extension and indicate the additional time considered necessary for completion
- Advise a person if a finding in the report is adverse to that person and afford them the opportunity to consider the finding and to make representations in relation to it
- Advise the person that they may seek a further review of the complaint by contacting the Office of the Ombudsman/Ombudsman for Children's Office
- Where a Complainant has requested a review of the outcome of the investigation, the relevant manager will suspend the implementation of a recommendation and will notify the Complainant of this suspension

The functions of the Review Officer is to:

To determine the appropriateness of a recommendation made, having regard to the two elements:

- All aspects of the complaint
- The investigation of the complaint

Having determined the appropriateness of the recommendation to uphold it, vary it, or make a new recommendation if he/she considers it appropriate to do so.

Step Four: Complaints referred to external agency/Independent review

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaints management process, he/she may seek a review of the complaint by the Ombudsman/ Ombudsman for children.

The complainant must be informed of their right to seek an independent review from the Ombudsman/Ombudsman for Children at any stage of the complaint management process.



3. Compliments and Feedback

Cheeverstown is committed to continually improving services through active listening and engagement with the people we support, their families, advocates, visitors, and the wider community.

We welcome all feedback including comments and compliments. Staff are encouraged to capture any compliments received and record on the compliments narrative form (Appendix 5) held in the local complaint folder.



Appendix 1: Cheeverstown Complaints Process

Cheeverstown Complaints Process

If the person who uses our service or their circle of support (inclusive of families) has a concern/complaint about services provided or omitted, please follow the below steps;

Stage 1: Point of Contact Resolution (Local Resolution) Staff or Manager

These are straight forward complaints which may be suitable for prompt management and to the person we support's satisfaction at the point of contact.

- Talk to a staff member if you have a concern.
- The staff member will try to resolve your concern at point of contact.
- Record locally the detail of the complaint, the solution or action taken and learnings if any in the local complaints folder.
- The complainant will receive feedback, either in verbal or written format.
- If unresolved escalate to your line manager who will try to resolve your concern within 48 hours (two working days).
- Record locally the detail of the complaint, the solution or action taken and learnings if any in the local complaints folder.
- The Complainant will receive feedback, either in verbal or written format.

If not resolved, or if the issue is more serious, it is then escalated to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal Investigation Process

Written complaints received from Stage 1 or elsewhere is escalated to the Senior Manager or Complaints Officer-fshanahan@cheeverstown.ie Ph 087-9026419.

They will:

- Speak with you.
- Gather information.
- Initiate a formal investigation.
- The complainant will receive a written outcome within 30 working days.
- If the investigation goes over the 30 day timeframe, the Senior Manager or Complaints Officer will provide the complainant with an update on the complaints progress.

Stage 3: Cheeverstown Internal Complaint Review

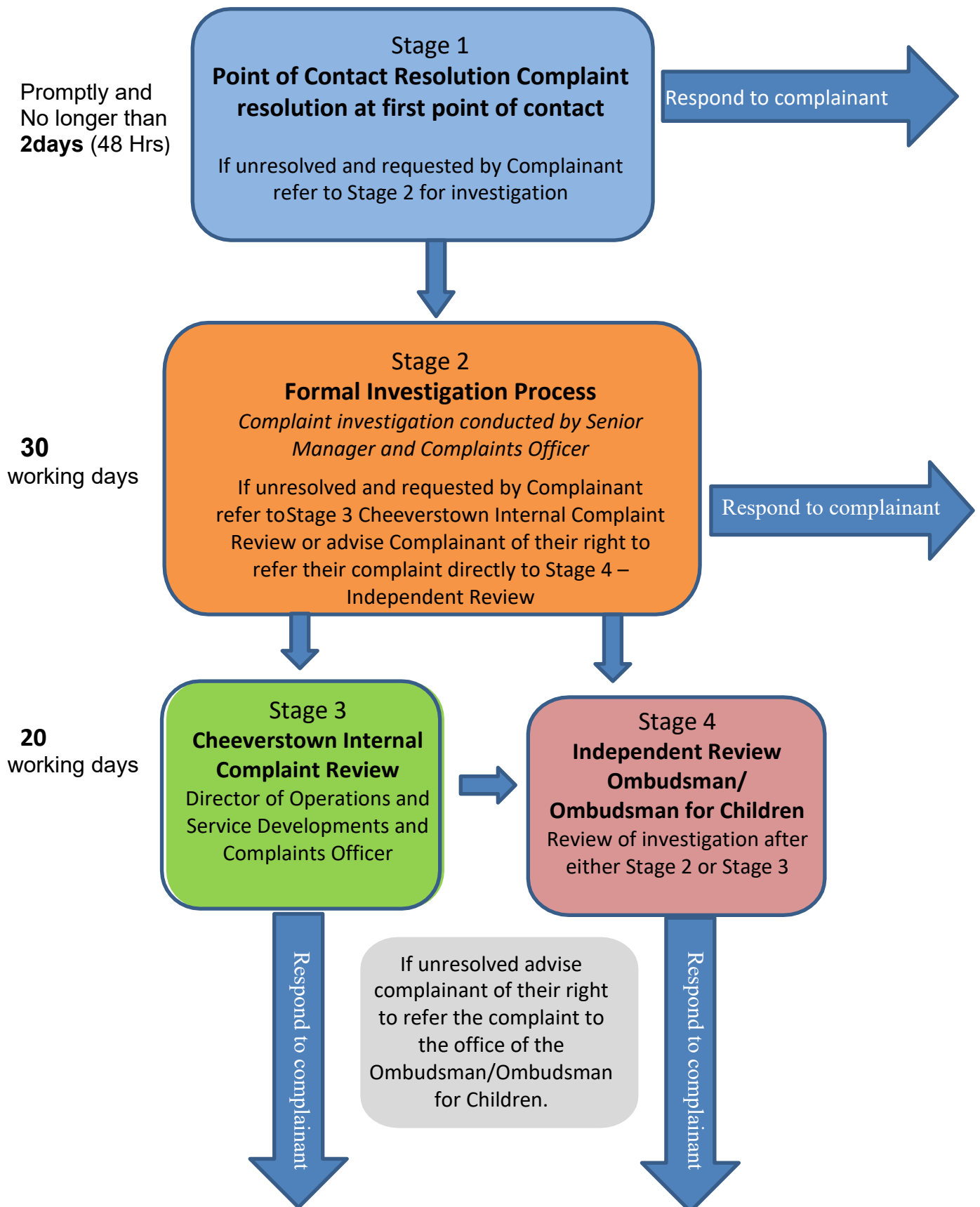
- The Complainant can ask for an internal complaint review of their complaint if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Complaint Investigation of Stage 2. This will be conducted by the Director of Operations & Service Development or Complaints Officer.
- The Complainant will get a response within 20 working days.

Stage 4: Independent Review

- A Complainant may choose to refer their complaint for independent review (e.g. Office of the Ombudsman/Ombudsman for Children's Office) either directly following Stage 2 or following a Stage 3 Internal Complaint Review.



Appendix 2 Summary of Complaints Procedure





Appendix 3 Cheeverstown Complaint Form

Type of Complaint:

Verbal

☐

Written

☐

<p>Complainant details</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Phone: _____</p> <p>Relationship/ Role/Position: _____</p>	<p>Name of the person we support (if applicable)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Phone: _____</p> <p>_____</p>
--	---

Form Completed By: _____ Date: _____

Details of Complaint or Comment

What happened? Who was involved? Where & when did it occur? What are you concerned about?

Supporting Information:

Have you attempted to resolve the matter?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes what steps/measures have been taken?

**Desired Outcome/ Suggested Action**

What is your desired outcome in making this complaint and what would you like to see happen now?

Declaration

I confirm the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Complaint Received by: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Complaint Acknowledged by _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Complaint Reported to Department Manager _____ Date: _____ Time: _____



FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

This section to be completed by the person managing the Complaint

Actions- Please include dates, timeframes and people responsible for implementing actions (if more information is required, please use the complaint narrative notes)

<file:///\\w2k12-file\\ctlibrary\\Library\\Complaints\\Compliments%20Narrative.docx>

Initial actions taken to resolve the complaint:

Further action taken: YES

If Yes please state Action

Further action taken: NO

If No please state why?

Appendix 4: Complaints Narrative Form

Complaints Narrative

Location:
Year:

[illegible]



Appendix 6: Staff Guidance on the Management of Complaints

Promoting Advocacy

Cheeverstown organisational ethos is one of responsiveness to the development of communication, assertiveness and self-expression by people we support.

The service strives to create a culture where people we support can feel confident to express any dissatisfaction in an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Cheeverstown provides opportunities to develop working advocacy groups within the organisation and membership of advocacy groups in the wider community.

Cheeverstown facilitates group and individual education and training opportunities in advocacy in order to enhance people we support communication skills and their abilities to assert their own choices. Self- assertiveness, self-determination, self-esteem and decision-making are skills taught and encouraged.

Self-advocacy, as with other communication systems, is not solely reliant on verbal communication. A person can self-advocate in other ways, through the nod of their head, the blink of an eye or through music and art.

Support networks are vital to all forms of advocacy, but in particular self- advocacy. Information is also a prerequisite to advocacy in order for the people we support to make informed choices. Information on the complaints procedure will be discussed with people we support and they will be supported to access the procedures.

Those advocating on behalf of the people we support will share an ethos of respect and empowerment. A staff member or a trusted person may also be an advocate for people we support within the principles of advocacy as listed below.

The Citizen Information Board (2005) outlines the principles of advocacy as:

- Empowerment of the person where possible
- Respect for the person and his/her wishes
- Acting in the person's best interest
- Acting independently
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Acting with diligence and competence

Before deciding to advocate on behalf of a complainant, staff must ensure that they are in a position to advocate impartially and fairly.

Staff acting as advocates should have no previous involvement in the actions complained of, or in the examination/investigation of the complaint.

Staff should not feel compelled to act as an advocate where they do not feel competent or supported to do so and must ensure that they direct the service user to appropriate advocacy supports.



Guidelines for responding to complaints

Cheeverstown recognises and appreciates that people we support and their families or advocates can require support to complain about their care, treatment or service environment and they may feel strange, uncomfortable or vulnerable when making a complaint. Therefore staff will provide a comfortable, supportive environment to enable services users and their families or advocates make a complaint.

In providing a supportive atmosphere within which services users, their families or advocates can complain, the following guidelines will support staff to provide an appropriate response

When listening to a complaint:

This is an opportunity to find out more about what needs the complainant has, and is an opportunity to meet that need. Inform him or her of the complaints procedure.

Keep it confidential:

Information regarding complaints will be on a strictly need – to – know basis.

Take all complaints seriously:

Be aware that it can be difficult for the complainant to complain.

Find an uninterrupted space:

Note where the complaint is being made and sensitively direct the complainant to a more appropriate or private space if necessary.

Take time to listen:

Once the person begins to make a complaint, allow them to talk freely and listen attentively. If there are time constraints, acknowledge their complaint and set time later for a more detailed account.

Show active and courteous listening:

Be inviting, open and positive. Be aware of your own body language, eye contact, voice and positive conversation (i.e. tell me more, how, when, etc.)

Take a neutral stance:

Affirm their feelings. Do not take the complaint personally or defensively allocate blame. Apologise for their upset without taking the blame prior to investigation.

Try to resolve the complaint at this stage if appropriate.

Complaints are best resolved at local level.

Do not say, “It is not my area/department”, say “I will refer it on”:

Refer the complaint to the relevant person and inform the complainant that the relevant person will be in contact. Inform them of the next actions to address their complaint.



Thank the person for acting on the issue/concern by discussing it with you:

Acknowledge that Cheeverstown regrets that they should feel inconvenienced or upset in any way. Apologise, if relevant at this stage. Give information on the process of responding to complaints. (i.e. steps, who, timeframe etc.)

Report the complaint:

Fill in the relevant form. Ensure the complainant is aware of the procedure involved for acting on their complaint/concern. Refer to the Department Manager who will then follow up by contacting the complainant.

Department Manager:

The manager will respond on hearing an unresolved complaint from front line staff on behalf of people we support or their families.

Redress and Apologies and Explanations:

In giving feedback to the complainant offer an apology if appropriate, explain and outline action/changes that will follow.

Remember, when responding to a complaint:

Listen: Listen in a courteous and professional manner.

Respond: Give an honest, speedy and sensitive response.

Reassure: Treat complainant in a respectful and confidential manner

Feedback: Inform complainant of the process and what will happen to their complaint.

Cheeverstown is a learning organisation which positively and actively receives and responds to messages of how it can improve.

Appendix 7 Complaints Log

[illegible]