

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE



Policy Statement

We take all complaints and concerns seriously and are committed to providing a high-quality, safe and caring service. We want patients, service users, parents, carers and representatives to be satisfied with their experience and to feel confident that any concerns will be listened to and addressed fairly.

All complaints will be handled courteously, promptly, sensitively and without discrimination. No person will receive less favourable treatment because they have made a complaint in good faith.

This policy reflects the complaints requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework and current Ofsted guidance.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide a clear and accessible way to raise a concern or complaint;
- resolve concerns as quickly and informally as possible;
- ensure formal complaints are investigated fairly and consistently;
- keep complainants informed throughout the process;
- identify improvements that can be made to our service; and
- meet our legal and regulatory responsibilities.

Who may make a complaint?

A complaint may be made by:

- a patient or service user;
- a parent or carer;
- a person acting on behalf of a patient or service user, with their permission where appropriate;
- a visitor; or
- another person affected by our service.

Reasonable support will be provided to anyone who needs help making a complaint.

Complaints may also be submitted anonymously, although this may limit our ability to investigate or provide a response.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of our service, including:

- the quality or standard of care or service provided;
- the conduct of a member of staff;
- communication or delays;
- decisions made by the service;
- the environment, facilities or safety arrangements;
- equality, dignity or respect;
- a failure to follow a policy or agreed procedure; or
- concerns that the service is not meeting its regulatory requirements.

A concern does not have to be submitted in writing before it will be taken seriously.

Responsibility for complaints

The Area Manager has overall responsibility for managing and investigating complaints.

All members of staff are responsible for:

- listening carefully and respectfully;
- remaining calm, courteous and professional;
- recording the relevant details accurately;
- taking any immediate action needed to protect a person from harm;
- attempting to resolve straightforward concerns where appropriate; and
- referring the matter promptly to the Area Manager.

If the complaint concerns the Area Manager, or if the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Area Manager's response, the complaint will be referred to the General Manager.

How to make a complaint

A complaint may be made:

- in person;
- by telephone;
- by email; or
- in writing.

The complainant should provide, where possible:

- their name and contact details;
- details of what happened;
- when and where it happened;
- the names of anyone involved;
- details of any previous attempts to resolve the matter; and
- what they would like us to do to resolve the complaint.

A person making a verbal complaint may be asked to confirm the details in writing, particularly where the matter is complex. We will provide assistance if they have difficulty doing this.

Informal resolution

Where appropriate, we will try to resolve concerns immediately and informally.

If a complaint is made by telephone or in person, the member of staff receiving it will listen carefully and offer to refer the complainant to the Area Manager immediately.

If the Area Manager is unavailable, the complainant will be told when they can expect to be contacted. Where appropriate, arrangements may instead be made for the complainant to speak to the General Manager.

An informal resolution does not prevent a complainant from making a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied.

Formal complaints procedure

Stage 1: Acknowledgement

Formal complaints will be acknowledged as soon as reasonably possible and normally within three working days.

The acknowledgement will confirm:

- that the complaint has been received;
- who will investigate it;
- how the investigator may be contacted;
- whether any further information is required; and
- when the complainant can expect a response.

Stage 2: Investigation

The Area Manager will investigate the complaint fairly and objectively. This may include:

- speaking to the complainant;

- interviewing staff or other people involved;
- reviewing relevant records, policies or procedures;
- examining any available evidence; and
- considering whether immediate corrective or safeguarding action is required.

Anyone directly involved in the subject of the complaint will not be solely responsible for deciding its outcome.

Stage 3: Outcome

The complainant will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible and, in all cases involving a formal complaint about the service's fulfilment of relevant early years requirements, within 28 calendar days of the complaint being received.

The response will explain:

- the issues investigated;
- the findings reached;
- whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- any action already taken or planned;
- any learning or service improvements identified; and
- what the complainant may do if they remain dissatisfied.

The outcome will be provided in writing if the complaint was made in writing or if the complainant requests a written response.

If exceptional circumstances affect the investigation, the complainant will be informed of the reason and given an updated timescale. The statutory outcome requirement of 28 days will be observed wherever it applies.

Review by the General Manager

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 3 response, they may ask the General Manager to review how the complaint was handled.

The request should explain:

- why the complainant remains dissatisfied;
- which part of the response they dispute; and
- what further outcome they are seeking.

The General Manager will review the complaint, the investigation and the response. They may undertake further enquiries where necessary and will provide a final written response as soon as reasonably possible.

If the complaint is about the General Manager, it will be referred to an appropriate senior person who has not previously been involved.

Safeguarding concerns

A complaint suggesting that a child or vulnerable person may be at risk of harm will be dealt with immediately under the relevant safeguarding policy. The complaint will not be delayed while the ordinary complaints procedure is followed.

Concerns about a child's safety should be reported to the relevant local authority children's services team or the police on 101. If a child or another person is in immediate danger, call 999. Where required, we will notify Ofsted, the local authority, the police or another appropriate regulatory or safeguarding body.

Contacting Ofsted

We encourage complainants to raise concerns with us first so that we have an opportunity to investigate and respond.

However, a complainant may contact Ofsted if:

- they are dissatisfied with our response;
- they believe we are not meeting the requirements of our registration;
- the concern cannot appropriately be discussed with us; or
- the matter involves a serious safeguarding or regulatory concern.

Ofsted can be contacted using the following details:

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 4666

Online guidance: [Complain about childcare](#)

Ofsted may review the information, carry out an inspection, ask the provider to take action or work with another agency. Ofsted regulates childcare services but cannot resolve individual disagreements between a complainant and a provider.

If the provider is registered with a childminder agency rather than directly with Ofsted, complaints should initially be directed to that agency.

Confidentiality and data protection

Complaints will be treated confidentially and information will be shared only with those who need it to investigate the matter, respond appropriately or meet a legal or safeguarding responsibility.

Complaint information will be handled in accordance with applicable data-protection legislation and our privacy and record-retention arrangements.

Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information must be shared to protect a child or vulnerable person, comply with the law or meet a regulatory requirement.

Complaint records

We will maintain a written record of formal complaints and their outcomes. The record will include:

- the date the complaint was received;
- the complainant's details, where provided;
- a summary of the complaint;
- how the complaint was investigated;
- the findings and outcome;
- any action taken;
- the date the complainant was informed; and
- any lessons or improvements identified.

Complaint records will be stored securely and made available to Ofsted, or the relevant childminder agency, when legally required or requested.

Fair treatment

Patients, service users, children, parents, carers and representatives will not be disadvantaged because they have made a complaint in good faith.

Staff who are the subject of a complaint will also be treated fairly and given an appropriate opportunity to provide information as part of the investigation.

Where a complaint involves staff conduct, the matter may also be considered under the organisation's disciplinary procedures. Details of confidential employment action will not normally be shared with the complainant.

Learning from complaints

Complaints provide an opportunity to improve our service. The Area Manager will review complaints to identify:

- recurring concerns or patterns;
- safeguarding or safety issues;
- training needs;
- weaknesses in policies or working practices; and
- actions required to prevent similar problems.

Where appropriate, improvements will be included in service-development plans and monitored to ensure that they are completed.

Policy availability and review

This policy will be made available to patients, service users, parents, carers, representatives, staff and Ofsted on request.

Staff will be made aware of the policy and their responsibilities for receiving, recording and referring complaints.

The policy will be reviewed annually, following a significant complaint, or sooner if legislation, regulatory requirements or Ofsted guidance changes.

Policy owner: Adam Rowles - Director & Tom Feighan - General Manager

Effective from: 1st September 2026

Review date: 1st September 2027