

123 AFTER SCHOOL CLUB

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Definition of a Complaint

For the purpose of this policy a complaint is defined as any action or lack of action by our setting that is alleged not to accord with our quality of service and business practice.

Principles

Guidance and regulations on the Children (NI) Order (1995) states that there should be a system whereby parents can express their views on and be able to contribute to and alter the care environment of their child/children.

Policy's Statement and Intent.

We aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all children attending our facility. Sometimes things will go wrong, it is important that if they do. Receiving and acting on the views of those who use our services is vital to our success. It is important they are reported as required, any appropriate lessons are learned and steps are taken as far as possible to avoid any recurrence.

As per Minimum Standards, a copy of our complaints policy is provided in our Statement of Purpose which is issued annually to the parents of all the children who attend our facility. It is also publicised on our parents' noticeboard.

We try to ensure that:

- making a complaint is easy and straightforward
- All complaints should be welcomed and dealt with in a speedy, efficient and sensitive manner and always in confidence.
- Every attempt should be made to resolve the difficulty at the earliest opportunity.
- We respond to complaints proportionately, this could be an immediate informal response right through to a formal written response,
- Management and staff should welcome the opportunity to meet with complainants, where appropriate, to discuss the issues they have raised as a valuable way of positively resolving complaints.
- The procedures must be accessible to those who wish/need to use them and to that end information systems for making comments will be made available.

- The timescales within the Policy for formal complaints will be adhered to ie. **all formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days with a full written response made available within 20 working days.** Where it is not feasible or practical to do so an explanation will be given as to why and a timescale for resolution advised.
- A written record of complaints will be kept confidentially and available for Inspection by the Trusts' Early Years Team.

The aim of the Policy is to:

- show that we have a clear focus on customer and client needs.
- Show we are responsible and accountable
- Enable problems and concerns to be tackled early. It can minimise the adverse effects of things that go wrong and reduce the chances of problems escalating.
- Help the organisation measure the quality of our services and gives management and staff an opportunity to monitor and improve them.
- Foster good communication at the earliest opportunity and a good reputation with our parents/carers/staff. Confirming our commitment to excellence.

Complaints may be made in writing, in person, by email or by using the complaint form included in this policy document.

Roles and Responsibilities

Manager

The Manager is ultimately responsible for the management and administration of this Policy and it is their responsibility to ensure that:

- all formal complaints are dealt with appropriately, within the boundaries identified within the Policy.
- Systems exist to record and monitor the nature of all complaints received and action taken.
- A complaint register is held confidentially and in line with Minimum Standards.
- Appropriate support exists for staff who are the subject of complaints.
- Any necessary action identified as part of the complaint resolution procedure is put in place.
- Staff are made aware of and understand their responsibilities under the Policy.

Staff

It is important that all staff:

- are fully aware and understand their responsibility for recognising potential complaints as the first point of contact for customers.
- Undertake necessary training in the handling of complaints.
- Are welcoming of complaints as part of our total approach to customer care and service delivery.
- Use complaints and comments as a valuable monitor of the quality of service.
- Keep records in the organisational format to allow for complaints monitoring.
- Are prepared to learn from the outcome of the complaints procedure to enable their service to become more user sensitive and avoid the occurrence of further complaints.

The Complainant

The following tasks are not binding with regard to the complainant. The complainant will receive more effective responses where they:

- co-operate with the setting in seeking a solution to the complaint;
- express the complaint in full as early as possible;
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.

Complaints against Staff

If a complaint is made against an individual member of our staff this will be dealt with by the Manager. If a complaint is made against the Manager this will be dealt with under the direction of the link social worker from the Early Years Team.

Support for staff

Staff often feel vulnerable when they are involved in assisting with the resolution of a complaint, particularly if they are the subject of the complaint. Support throughout the complaints procedure is available from the Manager. If they feel they are not receiving the support they need they may seek help and support from the Early Years Team.

Handling Complaints

Informal approach

An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. Therefore, in the first instance you should raise the issue with the member of staff concerned as far as is reasonably practicable, in order that the matter might be resolved swiftly and informally. If, however, the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily you should follow our formal complaints procedure.

Formal approach

We can receive complaints verbally, in writing, by email or by using the complaint form included. We treat all complaints seriously. You can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times. We expect that you will also treat our staff dealing with your complaint with the same courtesy, respect and fairness.

We have a three-stage complaints handling procedure. At each stage it will help to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clarity and detail as possible, including providing documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint. If we do not have all the details required to deal with the complaint, we may contact you and ask for further information.

Complaints Procedure

Step 1

If your complaint is within your child's room, we suggest that you contact Michelle to see if the problem can be resolved to your satisfaction. Staff will do everything they can to resolve any issues, including reviewing procedures. We expect the majority of complaints to be resolved at this stage.

Step 2

If you are dissatisfied with the response at Step 1 you may request a review. Complaints may be made in writing to the Manager.

In a case of a complaint against the Manager, this may be handled by the Early Years Team (02895042811)

Step 3

If the complainant is not happy with the outcome, they may seek to refer the matter to the Early Tears Team. The decision reached at this stage will be final and a record will be kept and copied to all parties concerned.

To help us investigate and resolve the problem as quickly as possible, please provide the following information:

1. Your name
2. Clear description of the concern or complaint
3. Details of what you would like us to do to put it right
4. A daytime telephone number where we can contact you.

All records, including complaints, accidents, untoward events and children's records are retained in secure storage.

Our facility has many policies and procedures to comply with and must act within the scope of these. In individual cases it may be necessary to involve Social Services, if the welfare of the child is involved or there is a possible breach of registration requirements. In this instance the Trust Early Years Team will be informed and they will carry out further investigations of the complaint.

Complainants are asked to read, sign and date the recorded outcome of any complaint, indicating whether or not they are satisfied with the steps taken to resolve the matter. Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, they are advised of other channels available to them to pursue their complaint.

Signed M.Scott Oct 2024