

## Complaints and Compliments Policy

Approval/Ratified by:	Karen Holden Jo Booth Owner Directors
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Audience:	All Employees

### Policy Statement

All complaints will be welcomed, and Lighthouse Collaborative Care will endeavour to learn from these and use them to improve the service. Complaints will be processed in a timely way and with a focus on positive resolution. If we are unable to resolve the complaint, we will explain how this may be taken further. Lighthouse Collaborative Care will not discriminate against or treat anyone differently because they wish to complain.

Any complaint will be addressed without delay and the complainant is kept informed of progress.

The registered person of the home regularly reviews the records of complaints by children or concerning the welfare of children, to check satisfactory operation of the complaint's procedure, and to identify both patterns of complaint and action taken on individual complaints. The registered person takes any appropriate action from such a review of the home's policies and practices and takes any necessary further follow-up action about individual cases.

All staff will receive training in the complaint's procedures covering the following areas:

- What constitutes a complaint
- What is the procedure for dealing with an informal complaint in the home and how this is recorded
- To whom a complaint is made outside the home
- The procedure to be followed should a complaint not be resolved promptly by informal means, including who should be notified and the keeping of record
- How the child can be assisted in making a complaint, including situations where the child has communication impairment.

The Company recognises that in some circumstances they may be contacted with a compliment for a member of staff regarding the service they have provided for young people. It is the policy of Lighthouse Collaborative Care that essentially the employee or employees referred to will be made aware of any compliments received.

### What Is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however, made, about the standard of service, the actions, or lack of action by the home towards a child/ young person.

As a general rule, all efforts should be made to resolve any complaints or concerns at the earliest opportunity.

A complaint could be about:

- An unwelcome or disputed decision.
- The quality or appropriateness of a service.
- A delay in decision-making or the provision of services.
- The attitude or behaviour of the adults.
- An individual feeling discriminated against.
- Delays in dealing with problems or resolving concerns.

**NOTE:** This list is indicative only and should not be used as a means of restricting matters which can be complained about.

## Who May Make a Complaint?

The following people have a right to use the complaints procedure:

- A child/ young person living in the home (or who used to live in the home)
- Parents
- Adult working in the home
- Social Workers
- Placing Authority
- Employees of the home
- Members of the public
- Any person acting on behalf of a child/ young person

Complainants must:

- Be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Receive a timely and appropriate response to their complaint.
- Be told the outcome of any investigation; and
- Be told about any action taken arising from the outcome of their complaint.

**Complaints procedures should not be used to handle any concerns that suggest significant harm might have been caused to a child or that a child might be at risk of harm.** If, at any point, concerns are raised about possible harm to a child from abuse, neglect, or exploitation, these should always be shared with police or social work without delay, following local child protection procedures.

## Informing Children/ Young People / Adults About the Complaints Procedure

Children/ young people will be informed about the Complaints Procedure in a way that is appropriate to their age and level of understanding. This information is detailed in the Child/ Young Person's Guide which is given to them before or upon moving into the home. Such information includes an explanation of the role of an advocate and provides contact details for independent advocacy services that can help children/ young people make complaints or make a complaint on their behalf. The Registered Manager must take all reasonable steps to ensure that children/ young people feel comfortable with making complaints, that they are supported to make complaints, and are free from reprisals if they choose to do so. Children/ young people should be given any reasonable assistance they require or request, including being advised that they may ask someone else to make a complaint on their behalf.

If the child/ young person's complaint is about their Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, or family time agreements, or relates to any matters about their Placing Authority Care Plan, the Placing Authority's Complaints Policy should be followed.

Lighthouse Collaborative Care knows that listening to and capturing the voice of the child is essential for effective safeguarding practice. We will work to ensure children and young people can raise their worries,

concerns and complaints in a variety of different ways, for example, through the 'grumbles' book, Clearcare Kids App, and written record/complaints form.

Parents and guardians will be made aware upon their child moving in that they can complain verbally, in writing, or by email either to Lighthouse Collaborative Care or the Placing Authority. The Registered Manager will send out a letter of introduction after moving in outlining this procedure, and the letter will include a copy of the Complaint's Procedure along with any relevant contact details.

For all other interested parties, the Complaints Procedure will be made available on the Lighthouse Collaborative Cares company website.

## Receiving Complaints

Complaints can be made in writing using clearcare; via text or e-mail, or verbally in person. Normally complaints should be made within 1 year on the grounds on which the complaint arose. However, the time limit can be extended at the Registered Manager's discretion if it is still possible to consider the complaint effectively and/or if there was a legitimate reason why the complaint was not made earlier.

When children/ young people indicate they wish to make a complaint, the person receiving it should do what they reasonably can to resolve the issue/concern at the lowest possible level.

If it is not possible to resolve the issue at a lower level, a formal complaint should be made. If the child/ young person is supported to make a complaint, the details of the person providing the support should be recorded.

## Investigating Officers

In all cases where complaints are received, the Registered Manager must be informed.

In most cases, the Registered Manager will be responsible for implementing this Complaints Procedure. However, if a complaint is made against the Registered Manager, then all Stages described below will be carried out by the Responsible Individual.

If a complaint is made against the Responsible Individual, then the Registered Manager will inform the Director on call and where necessary involve the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and potentially an external consultant, only if the complaint cannot be resolved at the local resolution stage (Stage 1).

No person who is the subject of a complaint takes any part in its consideration or investigation, except at the local resolution stage (Stage 1) if the Investigating Officer considers it appropriate.

## Local Resolution (Stage 1)

**Timescale: 10 working days from the receipt of a Stage 1 complaint (with the possibility of 10 further days for complex complaints or if an advocate is required).**

If comments made indicate dissatisfaction with the home or our adults working in the home, the person receiving the complaint should if they have the delegated responsibility to do so, try to resolve the matter quickly. Wherever appropriate, children/ young people should be asked to agree to a 'local' resolution.

Where a complaint is received it will be formally acknowledged within 2 working days, and the child/ young person will be given information on the timescale within which they will receive a response. If the complaint is made by a child or young person, the person receiving the complaint should check whether they have, or need, access to an independent advocate.

If it is possible to resolve the complaint within the required timescale (see start of this section), the person resolving it should do the following:

- Note the fact that a complaint has been made and resolved in the child/ young person's Daily Log.
- Record a summary of the complaint and how it was resolved in the Complaints Log (taking care to remove sensitive or personal information).
- Inform the Registered Manager (if not already involved).

If the matter cannot be resolved to the child/ young person's satisfaction within 20 working days, they must be advised that they have a right to proceed to Stage 2 and be given assistance to do so as necessary.

## **Investigation (Stage 2)**

**Timescale: 25 working days from the receipt of a Stage 2 complaint.**

**NOTE:** Any Stage 2 complaints made by children/ young people or on their behalf must be notified to the child/ young person's Social Worker, who should share this with the child/ young person's Independent Reviewing Officer. Matters that must be considered at this stage are:

- Stage 1 Complaints that are not resolved satisfactorily.
- Where the child/ young person or person making a complaint on their behalf has requested a Stage 2 investigation.

Stage 2 complaints must be referred to the appropriate Investigating Officer (as above).

Before the investigation begins, the Investigating Officer should clarify the substance of the complaint. They should attempt to resolve the matter as quickly as possible but within the timescales stated at the start of this section unless agreed in writing by the child. The child/ young person should be notified of the outcome of the investigation, preferably verbally, but always in writing. If the complaint is upheld, the child/ young person should be asked what they would like to happen, and an apology offered. Details of any remedial action undertaken should be confirmed.

Details of the outcome must be recorded in the Complaints Log, which must be countersigned by the Registered Manager if different from the Investigating Officer. Copies of all records and correspondence relating to the complaint should be kept as follows:

- On any relevant child/ young person's file.
- In the Complaints Log.
- A copy of the outcome must be sent to the Placing Authority.

## **Review Panel (Stage 3)**

**A request for a review panel must be made within 20 days of the end of the investigation stage. The panel must meet within 30 days of the request.**

If dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 investigation, the child/ young person or the person who made the complaint on their behalf may request a Stage 3 review panel to consider their complaint.

To instigate a Stage 3 review panel, the child/ young person or person making the complaint on their behalf should notify the Investigating Officer either verbally or in writing. The notification will be confirmed in writing explaining the process and timescales for undertaking a Stage 3 review panel.

The Investigating Officer will ensure that:

- Relevant Social Workers are notified and briefed as necessary until the matter is resolved
- The complainant is clear about the process and timescales
- The complainant has access to an independent advocate or representative
- A review panel is established to consider the matter

- The review panel will consist of 3 people that are independent of the matter being considered. One of the panel members will be asked to chair the panel and report to the Investigating Officer on the recommendations that are made
- Necessary arrangements are made for the panel to be convened and conducted in a fair manner
- The recommendations of the panel are properly considered, involving the Registered Manager as appropriate, and any decisions or actions are acted upon promptly
- The complainant and their advocate/representative are briefed verbally and in writing of the outcome within 3 working days of a decision being reached.

## **Disciplinary Procedures**

Lighthouse Collaborative Care operates a Disciplinary Procedure which provides for the suspension of an employee where necessary in the interests of the safety or welfare of children/ young people.

Failure on the part of an employee to report an incident or complaint relating to the abuse, or suspected abuse of a child/ young person to an appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instigated.

Adults should be aware that any allegations of serious misconduct made against them by a child/ young person will result in automatic suspension pending investigation. The Placing Authority, Host Authority Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and Ofsted will be informed, and safeguarding procedures implemented in line with Lighthouse Collaborative Care's Safeguarding Policy.

## **Complaints Made Not on Behalf of a Child or Young Person**

Complaints made by members of the public in their own right (e.g. neighbours), and other professionals (e.g., Social Workers, teachers etc.) will be dealt with using the same process.

If an adult working in the home has a complaint, they can discuss it with their supervisor. If this is not satisfactory, the matter can be brought to the attention of the Registered Manager, and then, if necessary, to the Responsible Individual.

All complaints will be dealt with according to the procedures and timescales set out above.

## **Recording, Monitoring and Notifications**

It is the Registered Manager's responsibility to:

- Ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation in The Old Parsonage's Complaints Log on Clearcare.
- Regularly review the records of complaints and worries raised by children/ young people, or concerning the welfare of children/ young people, to check the satisfactory operation of the Complaints Procedure and to identify both patterns of complaints and actions taken on individual complaints
- Take any appropriate action from such a review about the home's policies, procedures and practices, as well as taking any necessary further follow-up action about individual cases
- Maintain and supply to Ofsted at its request a record containing the summary of complaints made during the preceding 12 months and the action that was taken
- Notify the Placing Authority / Ofsted about all serious complaints from children/ young people, parents, guardians, schools, or any other profession as well as any action that has been taken.
- Notify the placing Authority and Ofsted of any concerns related to safeguarding or potential harm to residents



## Important Contacts

The child / young person (or adult who is complaining on their behalf) is to be advised that complaints can also be directed to Ofsted, the Children's Commissioner Help at Hand Service, or their Social Worker / Placing Authority at any stage of the complaints process.

### **Children's Commissioner for England**

[Help at Hand](#) – free confidential support and advice for Children in Care, living away from home or working with Children's Services.

Tel: 0800 528 0731 (free phone number)

Email: [help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

### **Ofsted (who regulates and inspects Children's Homes)**

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## Compliments

We also welcome comments and compliments from service users and colleagues. This information allows us to celebrate the good work that has been done by staff and understand what we are getting right. This helps us to improve our services and recognise our staff.

The Manager will respond to the compliments received and will keep copies of the compliment letter and the reply. They will be recorded on the compliments log in Clearcare. The compliment will then be passed to the people whose work or service is being complimented.