

10 Working in partnership with parents/carers and other agencies procedures

10.02 Complaints procedure for parents/carers and service users

There is a fair way of dealing with issues as they arise in an informal way, but parents/carers may wish to exercise their right to make a formal complaint. They are informed of the procedure to do this and complaints are responded to in a timely way. The same procedures apply to agencies who may have a grievance or complaint.

Parents/carers

- If a parent/carer is unhappy about any aspect of their child's care or how they feel they have been treated, this should be discussed with the child's key person. The key person will listen to the parent/carer and acknowledge what they are unhappy about. The key person will offer an explanation and an apology if appropriate. The issue and how it was resolved is recorded in the child's file and Complaint Investigation Record. The recording will also make clear whether the issue being raised relates to a concern about quality of the service or practice, or a complaint. For allegations relating to serious harm to a child caused by a member of staff or volunteer, procedure 06.02 Low level concerns and allegations against staff, volunteers or agency staff is followed.
- If the parent/carer is not happy with the key person's response or wishes to complain about the key person or any other member of staff, they will be directed to the pre-school manager. Some parents/carers will want to make a written complaint; others will prefer to make it verbally; in which case the pre-school manager writes down the main issues of the complaint using the Complaint Investigation Record and keeps it in the child's file.
- The pre-school manager will investigate the complaint and will feedback to the parent/carer within 28 days. A confidential written report of the investigation is kept in the child's file if the complaint relates directly to a child. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, the manager may wish to store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint.
- When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Investigation Record, which is made available to Ofsted on request.
- If the parent/carer is still not satisfied, or if the complaint is about the pre-school manager, the pre-school manager is asked to forward their complaint verbally or in writing to the trustees.
- If the parent/carer is still not satisfied, then they are entitled to appeal the outcome verbally or in writing to the trustees for further investigation, who will respond to the parent/carer within a further 14 days.
- An agreed written record of the discussion is made as well as any decision or action to take as a result. All of the parties present at the meeting sign the record and receive a copy of it.
- This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Investigation Record.

- If the parent/carer cannot reach agreement with the pre-school, an external person is invited to help to settle the complaint. This person should be acceptable to both parties, listen to both sides and offer advice. A mediator has no legal powers but can help to define the problem, review the action so far and suggest further ways in which it might be resolved.
- Staff or volunteers within the Early Years Alliance are appropriate persons to be invited to act as mediators.
- The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. They can hold separate meetings with the pre-school personnel (manager and trustees) and the parent/carer, if this is decided to be helpful. The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice they give.
- When the mediator has concluded their investigations, a final meeting between the parent/carer, the manager and a representative from the trustees is held. The purpose of this meeting is to reach a decision on the action to be taken to deal with the complaint. The mediator's advice is used to reach this conclusion. The mediator is present at the meeting if all parties think this will help a decision to be reached.
- A record of this meeting, including the decision on the action to be taken, is made. Everyone present at the meeting signs the record and receives a copy of it. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded.
- If the complainant believes that the matter has not been resolved and there has been a breach of the EYFS requirements they are entitled to make a complaint to Ofsted. The manager will assist in any complaint investigation as well as in producing documentation that records the steps that were taken in response to the original complaint.
- The pre-school manager ensures that parent/carers know they can complain to Ofsted by telephone or in writing at any time as follows:

Applications, Regulatory and Contact (ARC) Team, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD or telephone: 0300 123 1231

Agencies

- If an individual from another agency wishes to make a formal complaint about a member of staff or any practice of the pre-school, it should be made in writing to the pre-school manager.
- The complaint is acknowledged in writing within 10 days of receiving it.
- The pre-school manager investigates the matter and meets with the individual to discuss the matter further within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- An agreement needs to be reached to resolve the matter.
- If agreement is not reached, the complainant may write to the pre-school manager's line manager (a trustee), who acknowledges the complaint within 5 days and reports back within 14 days.

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they are entitled to appeal and are referred to the trustees.

Ofsted complaints record

- Legislation requires pre-schools to keep a record of complaints and disclose these to Ofsted at inspection, or if requested by Ofsted at any other time.
- The record of complaints is a summative record only.
- A record of complaints will be kept for at least 3 years.
- In all cases where a complaint is upheld a review will be undertaken by the trustees to look for ways to improve practice where it is required.
- This procedure is displayed on the Little Doves CP website 'About – Policies – 10 Working in Partnership'

Further guidance

Complaint Investigation Record (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2015)

July 2023