



Making a complaint: Committee member

Policy Statement

We believe that children and parents/carers are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our setting and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the setting. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly, by an informal approach (with the appropriate member of staff). If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns. This policy specifically relates to complaints about Committee Members. We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our setting to a satisfactory conclusion for all parties involved. However, please be aware that more complex complaints may take longer to be resolved.

Procedures

All settings are required to keep a written record of any complaints that reach stage two and above, and their outcome. This is to be made available to parents/carers, as well as to Ofsted inspectors on request. A full procedure is set out in the Early Years Alliance publication Complaint Investigation Record (2012) which acts as the 'summary log' for this purpose.

The Chair of the Committee will take primary responsibility for investigating and handling any complaints against a committee member unless either of the following are true:

1. The complaint is against the Chair
2. There is a conflict of interest that makes the Chair unable to fulfil this responsibility

If either is the case, another member of the Committee will be nominated by the Committee (by an emergency meeting if necessary) to take on the role of Complaint Handler. The Committee will ensure conflicts of interest are considered when nominating the Complaint Handler.

Making a complaint

Stage 1

- Any parent/carer/third party who has a concern about a committee member talks over his/her concerns with the Committee Chair first.
- Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage.
- We record the issue, and how it was resolved, and this will be kept in the child's file (if relevant) or in a Committee complaints file

Stage 2

- If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the complaint is towards a member of the committee, the parent/carer/third party moves to this stage of the procedure, by putting the concerns or complaint in writing.
- For individuals who are not comfortable with making written complaints, there is a template form for recording complaints in the Complaint Investigation Record; the form may be completed by the Committee Chair/Complaint Handler and signed by the parent/carer.
- The Chair/Complaint Handler will conduct the investigation thoroughly, impartially, and confidentially, ensuring all evidence is documented correctly and minutes taken accurately of all meetings or conversations. Wherever possible, a written statement from the 'defendant' should be obtained as part of the investigation.
- Our setting stores all information relating to written complaints from parents/carers/third party, in the child's personal file. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, or does not relate to a specific child, the Committee may wish to store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint.
- Once a resolution is finalised, the Complaint Handler and Committee may decide to issue a written summary of the resolution to the defendant (withholding any confidential details as necessary). This will be done at the discretion of the Committee, depending on the nature of the complaint and its resolution.
- When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the Chair/Complaint Handler meets with the parents/carers/third party to discuss the outcome.
- We inform parents/carers/third party of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of them making the complaint unless the complaint is more complex in which case it could take several weeks to be investigated properly.
- When the complaint is resolved at this stage, we log the summative points in our Complaint Investigation Record, which is made available to Ofsted on request.

Stage 3

- If the parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they then request a meeting with the Chair/Complaint Handler. The parent/carer/third party may have a friend or partner present if they prefer, and the Chair/Complaint Handler should have the support of the management team.
- An agreed written record of the discussion is made, as well as any decision or action to take as a result. All 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, we log the summative points in our Complaint Investigation Record.

Stage 4

- If, at the stage three meeting, the parent/carer/third party cannot reach agreement with us, we invite an external mediator 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 us 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 our staff and the parent/carer/third party 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.

Stage 5

- When the mediator has concluded their investigations, a final meeting between the parent/carer/third party and the Chair/Complaint Handler 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 this meeting signs the record and receives a copy of it. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded.

The role of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and Cambridge and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the following authorities could be involved at any point: Ofsted, the Cambridge and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board or the Charities Commission

- Parents/carers/third party may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaint's procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of the setting's registration requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted as the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are adhered to.
- Parents/carers can complain to Ofsted by telephone or in writing to:
Ofsted National Business Unit, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231.
- These details are displayed on our setting's notice board.
- If a child appears to be at risk, we follow the procedures of the Cambridge and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board.
- In these cases, both the parent/carer/third party and our setting are informed, and our manager works with Ofsted or the Cambridge and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.

Records

- A record of complaints in relation to our setting, or the children, or the adults working in our setting, or any committee member, is kept for at least three years: including the date, the circumstances of the complaint, and how the complaint was managed.
- The outcome of all complaints is recorded in our Complaint Investigation Record, which is available for parents and Ofsted inspectors to view on request.

Other useful Early Years Alliance publications

- Complaint Investigation Record (2012)

Adoption and Annual Review of the Policy

This policy was adopted at a meeting of	Tiddlywinks Pre-School Committee
held on	22nd April 2024
Signed on behalf of the management committee	
Name of signatory	Hilary Allen
Role of signatory	Chair