



# Comments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy

This Policy document relates to the operation of:  
**GBNFC Group**

**Grendon & Billesley Nursery at Grendon Rd, B14 4RB**  
**GBNFC Children's Centre - based at the Chinnbrook Centre**  
**GBNFC Group at the Chinnbrook Centre B13 0ET**  
**Hollywood Pre-school Daycare - based at Hollywood J & I School B14 4TG**

**Date Agreed by the Management Board:** March 2019

**Review:** March 2020

**Signature:** 

## POLICY STATEMENT

The Centre is committed to achieving the highest standards of service delivery and to continuously improving its practice.

The Centre considers itself to be a "Learning Centre". This means that it actively evaluates its services and practices and continuously seeks to make improvements. One way in which the Centre does this is by listening to the feedback from its service users. It recognises that compliments, suggestions and complaints can provide valuable information about what the Centre is doing well and what it needs to do better. The Centre is therefore committed to taking all compliments, suggestions and complaints seriously and using them constructively to make improvements.

The Centre policy in respect of compliments, suggestions and complaints is underpinned by its core values - inclusion, equity, integrity, creativity and effective communication. The Centre is committed to ensuring that:

- Its service users have the opportunity to provide both positive and negative feedback
- All service users making a compliment, suggestion or complaint are treated with dignity and respect
- Service users providing negative feedback are not treated less favourably or denied access to services
- Feedback is responded to quickly and effectively and used to make improvements in the Centres services and practices
- The training, development and support needs of all managers, staff, volunteers and students in respect of handling compliments, suggestions and complaints are identified and addressed.

To ensure that the compliments, suggestions and complaints procedure is accessible to all customers, the Project will:

- Ensure copies of the leaflet summarising the policy and procedure are available and accessible within the Centre
- Ensure copies of the form "Tell us what you think" are available and accessible within the Centre



## CONFIDENTIALITY

The Centre recognises that, in the case of complaints, issues of confidentiality need to be given serious and careful consideration.

To ensure that confidentiality is maintained, for those making a complaint as well as for those who are the subject of a complaint, the Centre expects that:

- Managers, staff, volunteers and students who receive a "Tell us what you think" leaflet (or assist a service users to complete one) will forward it immediately to the appropriate manager and will not discuss its contents with others
- When dealing with a complaint, managers will give careful consideration to issues of confidentiality and will base any decisions on information-sharing on the specific circumstances at the time

## COMPLIMENTS ABOUT THE SERVICE

A compliment expresses praise and is an indication that a member of staff, volunteer, student, team or the Centre as a whole has done something well.

Compliments are a valuable source of feedback because they tell the Centre what it is doing well. This information allows the Centre to acknowledge and celebrate good practice and to build on its strengths to further improve its services/practice. Compliments also enable members of staff to receive praise and recognition for what they do well. Service users can make a compliment in a number of ways:

- By telephone
- By letter
- In person
- By completing the "Tell us what you think" form

The Centre will try and capture all compliments and will formally acknowledge those received through the 'Tell us what you think' form.



When a compliment is received on the 'Tell us what you think' form, it will be passed to the admin then to management. The admin will enter the details of the compliment onto the database and generate a letter of response. This letter, together with details of the compliment, will then be forwarded to the relevant manager who will:

- Send the letter to the person making the compliment to acknowledge receipt and to thank them for the feedback;
- Inform the relevant member(s) of staff, volunteers or students verbally or in writing about the compliment;

### SUGGESTIONS ABOUT THE SERVICE

A suggestion is an idea or proposal that is put forward for consideration. Suggestions are a valuable source of feedback because they may highlight a shortfall in service or practice. Additionally, suggestions from customers enable the Centre to consider and implement ideas that may not otherwise have been thought of. Service users can make a suggestion in a number of ways:

- by letter
- by telephone
- by a personal visit to the Project
- by completing the "Tell us what you think" form

When a suggestion is received by the service users, it will be passed to the admin for logging and processing. The admin will enter the details of the suggestion onto the database, generate a letter of response and inform the management. The letter will be passed to the relevant manager, with the details of the suggestion. The management will then:

- send out the letter of acknowledgment, advising that the suggestion will be considered seriously and feedback provided about the outcome;
- consider the suggestion - either individually or in discussion with the Management Team - and reach a decision about whether it can be implemented or not;
- write to the person who made the suggestion to either inform them of the action that has been taken as a result of their suggestion or to explain why the suggestion cannot be implemented;
- if needed add to the improvement plan or address in relevant meeting where minutes are taken.

## COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE SERVICE

A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about a service or about practice. A complaint implies that the person making the complaint (the 'complainant') is not satisfied in some way. Complaints can relate to a wide variety of issues - for example:

- The quality/standard of a service.
- The lack of a service.
- Delay in receiving a service.
- Refusal of a service.
- The conduct or attitude of staff.
- The way in which a decision has been made.

Complaints are a valuable source of information and feedback for the Centre. They provide an opportunity for the Centre to step back and to take an objective look at its services and practice, from the point of view of its service users. A complaint may, therefore, result in the Centre improving and further developing its policies, procedures and services and may also lead to members of staff working more effectively and efficiently.

In the case of complaints about childcare services provided by the Centre, complainants can go directly to OFSTED if they wish (Telephone Number - 0300 123 1231). We would hope to address and resolve the complaint before a service user feels there is a concern to go to OFSTED.

If customers wish to make their complaint to the Centre, they can do so in a number of ways:

- By letter
- By telephone
- By completing the "Tell us what you think" form
- In person, by visiting the Centre



The Centre complaints procedure contains stages and time scales to which we adhere to provide the most effective process to respond effectively:

- It gives the Centre the opportunity to address the issue/difficulty as close to the point of service delivery as possible, without the need for formal processes like investigations
- It enables the service user to get an outcome he/she is satisfied with, without the need to enter into formal processes
- It gives the service user the opportunity to take matters to a more formal level if he/she is not getting the desired outcome through the early stages of the procedure.

Please see the Complaints Procedure for full details and process.

### PROBLEM-SOLVING

As part of the complaints procedure, we look at problem-solving. Unless the complaint is of such a serious nature that it warrants a formal investigation, all complaints will initially be dealt with at this level.

The purpose of this is to try and resolve the issue/difficulty and the person receiving the complaint should immediately consider whether he/she is able to do this. Most complaints should be resolved at this level either by the member of staff receiving the complaint or the manager with responsibility for the service being complained about.

Resolution can often be achieved by:

- Listening carefully to what the complainant is saying
- Ensuring that the complainant knows that his/her complaint is being taken seriously
- Asking what desired outcome the complainant wants
- Offering an apology if that is appropriate under the circumstances
- Providing information to clarify matters if there has been a misunderstanding
- Assuring the complainant that, if an immediate resolution cannot be achieved, the matter will be properly considered and addressed and feedback provided.



It is useful at this point to remember that when a person complains, he/she expects one or more of the following:

- An acknowledgment of the complaint
- An explanation
- An apology
- The assurance that the issue/difficulty will not arise again

If the complainant's desired outcomes are met at this stage, the complaint goes no further.

The importance of the complaints procedure should not, therefore, be underestimated.

A complaint should be completed within 28 working days of the complaint being received, unless a longer period has been negotiated and agreed with the complainant. When a complaint is received, a letter of acknowledgment will be sent for and the manager will contact the complainant within 10 working days to arrange an appropriate time to discuss - either by telephone or face to face - the issue and the desired outcomes. It may be possible to reach a resolution at this stage.

If a resolution cannot be reached at this stage, the manager will advise the complainant that he/she will need to consider the matter further. In considering the issue, and attempting to identify a resolution, the manager may seek information and advice from members of staff at the Centre, peers, his/her Line Manager or another relevant professional. The manager may also look through case records and other written material.

After the manager has considered the issue, he/she will arrange to meet the complainant and again attempt to achieve a resolution. If a satisfactory resolution is achieved at this stage, the manager will write to the complainant to confirm the outcome, including details of any action which has been agreed. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of this stage, the manager will inform her/him that the complaint can be progressed to the next stage of the complaint's procedure, which will involve a formal investigation. Again, the manager will write to the complainant to confirm this. At this point the Chair of the Board will be notified if they have not been made aware of the complaint and will act on behalf of the setting in the formal investigation.



A record will be kept of all meetings, discussions and decisions and placed in the Complaints File. The "Action Log" is also used to confirm the outcome of the complaint: that is, whether it has been resolved or not. These will then be passed to the management for information and comment and finally passed to the manager.

## INVESTIGATION

A complaint will normally move to this stage if the complainant has not been satisfied with the response. On occasions, however, a complaint will be serious enough to be passed directly to investigation.

At this stage the chair of the Board is responsible alongside the manager to head the investigation either by themselves or the complaint is investigated by an "independent" person; that is someone who is not responsible for the service in question and who has not been involved in the complaint to date in any capacity (for example, offering advice or support to either the manager involved or the staff/volunteers/students implicated in the complaint).

The person appointed to investigate the complaint will normally be someone from the Management Team. However, an appropriately skilled and experienced individual from outside the organisation may be appointed to investigate if this is considered appropriate and/or necessary due to the nature or complexity of the complaint or because of issues of capacity within the Senior Management Team.

There is a "formal" outcome to the complaint; ie a report which identifies the:

- issues
- process of investigation
- findings (ie - whether the complaint is "upheld" or not)
- the evidence on which any conclusions have been based recommendation





This stage should be completed within 28 days unless a longer period has been negotiated and agreed with the complainant.

The complaint will be logged in the complaints file onto the database by the admin and forwarded to the manager, who will inform the Chair or Vice Chair of the Board of Directors.

The Investigation Officer/person will begin by meeting the complainant to establish the desired outcome and will then interview anyone who is likely to have relevant information about the events which led to the complaint. The Investigation Officer/person will also read all relevant written records and information relating to the issue.

Members of staff, volunteers and students who are interviewed because of their involvement in the events which led up to the complaint will have the right to have a friend or Trade Union representative at the interview if they wish to do so.

The Investigation Officer/person will produce a written report which will be considered by the Group Manager. The Group Manager will then meet the complainant to explain the outcome of the complaint and any action which is to be taken. The Investigation Officer/person may be asked to attend this meeting to clarify any queries or issues about the investigation or the findings and conclusions.

Within 5 working days of the meeting, the manager will write to confirm the outcome. If the complainant is not satisfied at this stage, the manager will log the complaint as "Not resolved" and write to the complainant about his/her right to an Appeal and invite the complainant to formally request that the complaint is progressed to the next level. If the complaint has been successfully concluded, the manager will set up and facilitate a "de-briefing session" for all managers and staff involved in the complaint. The purpose of a de-briefing session will be to:

- enable a discussion about the process
- discuss the learning points from the complaint
- enable staff and managers to explore any feelings evoked by the complaint and the investigation
- identify any training needs resulting from the outcome of the complaint
- identify what worked well during the process and what the Project would need to differently in the future.



## APPEAL

A complainant who is not satisfied with the outcome of a formal investigation has the right to request an Appeal. At this stage the complaint will be formally considered by the Board of Directors and a decision made about whether:

- the investigation process was thorough, fair and objective
- the findings were based on evidence
- the conclusions and recommendations were in line with the findings
- the Project has acted reasonably and appropriately in trying to resolve the complaint.

Once the complaint has been considered, the Centre's procedure for dealing with complaints will have been exhausted.

A request for an Appeal should be put in writing to the manager/chair within 10 working days of receipt of the letter confirming the outcome.

The request will be passed to the chair of the Board of Directors or, in the absence of the chair, to the vice chair. The chair/vice chair will appoint two Board members to consider the Appeal. The complainant will have the opportunity to meet the two Board members (the "Appeals Panel") to explain why he/she is not satisfied with the outcome to date and to state what the desired outcome is at this stage.

The Appeals Panel will consider all the relevant information and may interview the Investigation Officer/person to clarify matters relating to the investigation.

The Appeals Panel will reach a decision about whether or not the Centre has acted appropriately and reasonably in dealing with the complaint and will forward its findings, conclusions and any recommendations to the Chair/Vice Chair of the Board of Directors.

The Chair/Vice Chair will write to the complainant with the outcome of the Appeal, with the offer of a meeting to discuss the outcome, if the complainant wishes.

If the complaint concerned services that are regulated by OFSTED (i.e. - childcare), the letter will inform the complainant that he/she can contact OFSTED about the complaint if he/she is still not satisfied with the outcome. Contact details for OFSTED will be provided in the letter.



The manager will set up a de-briefing session for everyone involved in the complaint once process has been concluded.

### WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

A complainant has the right to withdraw a complaint at any time. If a complaint is withdrawn, no further action will be taken under this procedure. However, on occasions an incident or event may need to be dealt with under another procedure even if a complaint has been withdrawn (e.g. Disciplinary Procedure, referral to the Police for possible criminal proceedings and so on).

A decision about whether an incident/event is considered under a different procedure in the event of the complaint being withdrawn will be made by the Group Manager in consultation with the management team.

### PERSISTENT COMPLAINANTS

A complainant can be regarded as persistent when his/her complaint has been considered and found unjustified but the complainant is either not prepared to accept the conclusion or persists in making the same or similar complaints.

Continuing to respond to persistent complaints can take up a significant amount of time and resources and can cause distress to the staff involved.

If the Centre believes that a complainant has become persistent it will take legal advice about the matter and will also consult with OFSTED, if appropriate. Following consultation the Centre may decide not to pursue the complaint any further.

The decision not to pursue a complaint because it is deemed persistent will be made by the Chair of the Board of Directors, or, in the absence of the Chair, by the Vice Chair. The person making the complaint will be informed of this decision in writing.

Throughout this procedure, the Management Team will seek advice and guidance from HR (Citation) and will follow all advice.



