



Compliments and Complaints Policy & Procedure

This policy sets out a framework for listening, responding and improving the experience of Quaggy Development Trust's services. Those who use our services, their families or carers can compliment, raise concerns, complain and make suggestions for change. We welcome all forms of feedback and use this to improve the service we provide where we can. We want to remain responsive to feedback and will have at least an annual satisfaction survey for those who use our services. However, we receive more frequent feedback where this is possible.

Compliments

It is important to recognise the successes of the Trust and celebrate compliments. If families or members of the wider community wish to express their compliments to Quaggy or an individual member of staff, these can be forwarded to the CEO in person, via telephone or email. Compliments can also be recorded in the comments and suggestions box situated in reception. Compliments will be celebrated and shared with staff. Compliments may be made to any staff member, who will share with their line manager.

Complaints and Concerns

Quaggy Development Trust want children or adults who are dissatisfied with our services, to be heard and for their concerns to be dealt with promptly, efficiently and courteously. Under no circumstances will anyone be treated negatively as a result of making a complaint. Quaggy Development Trust has systems in place to record informal feedback and is committed to 'nip in the bud' informal complaints where possible. Informal complaints may be made to any staff member who will raise with their line manager within 24 hours.

All **formal** complaints must be in writing.

The CEO/Deputy CEO is ultimately responsible for complaints operationally. However, a Complaint Lead will be appointed to manage each formal complaint.

Quaggy Development Trust commits:

- **To ensure** that you are treated with courtesy and that the fact that you have complained will not adversely affect your future service.
- **To ensure** that when mistakes happen, you receive an appropriate explanation and apology.
- **To ensure** that we learn lessons from complaints and use these to improve our services.



Complaints must be made within 3 months of the date on which the matter occurred. An exception to this time limit would be where a safeguarding issue is raised.

If an employee receives a written complaint, they must ensure they send it immediately to the CEO/Deputy CEO. In the case of a formal, written complaint, a Complaints Lead will be appointed to manage the process.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is 'an expression of dissatisfaction requiring a response'.

Informal Complaints may be resolved by a phone call in some cases.

Formal Complaints must use this written procedure.

Who can complain?

- A person who receives or has received a service from the Trust.
- A person who is affected, or likely to be affected by the action, omission or decision of the Trust.

In the case of a child, the complainant must be a parent, guardian or other person who has legal responsibility of the child.

Where the CEO is/Deputy CEO of the opinion that a complainant does not have a sufficient interest in the person's welfare or is unsuitable to act as a representative, the complaint may be declined and that person is to be notified of this in writing and the reasons for decision are to be provided.

MANAGING THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The CEO/Deputy CEO will ensure the complaint is logged. An electronic folder is available to hold all correspondence and information. This information can then be accessed by relevant managers wishing to track action and outcomes against complaints.

Complaints should be sent to:

joanna@quaggychildrenscentre.org.uk

or by post to:

Joanna Lawrence (Deputy CEO)

Quaggy Children's Centre



Orchard Hill SE13 7QZ

The CEO/Deputy CEO will appoint a Complaint Lead to deal with the specific complaint. The Complaint Lead will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days. The complainant will be offered the opportunity to discuss, either by telephone or face-to-face, on initial contact and advised on how the complaint will be handled, issues around confidentiality, timescales and the process, which will be followed.

To ensure complaints are resolved swiftly the following timescales will apply:

Timescale	Actions
1 day	Resolve immediately, <i>if possible</i>
3 days	Acknowledge receipt
3 to 10 working days	Agree complaints timescale and complaint plan
30 working days	Conclusion of complaint

If the complaint can reasonably be resolved quickly, the Complaints Lead may contact the complainant and discuss the matter as soon as possible. Depending on the nature of the complaint, a meeting will be offered.

If the complaint cannot be resolved immediately, the Complaints Lead will send a letter or email of acknowledgement to the complainant within 3 working days of receipt of their complaint. This will outline the next steps to be taken and outline a complaint plan.

INVESTIGATION & WRITTEN RESPONSE

If the Complaint Lead believes an investigation is required, they may carry out an investigation proportionate to the complaint in a timely manner.

Where delays are incurred or anticipated due to the complexity of the investigation or employees being away, a holding letter or email will be sent to the complainant explaining the reason for delay.

If the complainant has chosen to have a meeting this will be chaired by the Complaints Lead.

Following the review of the complaint, the Complaint Lead will forward the final written response to the CEO/Deputy CEO to allow comment prior to sending to the complainant.



The Complaint Lead will compile a list of actions taken and lessons learnt as a result of the complaint and these will be shared with the SLT.

APPEALS

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the decision of the Complaints Lead, they can appeal their complaint to the CEO/Deputy CEO. The CEO/Deputy CEO will discuss the complaint with two trustees, one of which should be the Chair of Quaggy Development Trust. The following timescales will apply:

3 Working Days	A written acknowledgement of the wish to appeal will be made
30 working days	Deadline for appeal response

This internal procedure ends after the appeal is concluded. However, should the complaint relate to any of our regulated nursery provision, the complainant also has the right to contact Ofsted on 0300 123 1231.

If the complaint relates to our counselling service, there is the right to contact BACP as detailed in the QCCS Complaints Policy.

DEALING WITH UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT BEHAVIOUR AND UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS.

Definition: It is important to differentiate between 'persistent' complainants and 'unreasonably persistent' complainants. Arguably, some people are 'persistent' on the entirely reasonable basis that they feel the Trust has not dealt with their complaint properly and are not prepared to leave the matter there.

Unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants may have justified complaints or grievances but be pursuing them in inappropriate ways, or they may be intent on pursuing complaints which appear to have no substance, or which have already been investigated and determined. Their contact may be amicable but still place very heavy demands on employee's time, or they may be very emotionally charged and distressing for all involved.

Raising legitimate queries or criticisms of a complaints procedure as it progresses, for example if agreed timescales are not met, should not in itself lead to someone being regarded as an unreasonably persistent complainant.

Sometimes the situation between the Trust and a complainant can escalate and the behaviour moves from being unreasonable and unreasonably persistent to behaviour, which is unacceptable. For example, personal slurs, abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour. In the event of such behaviour, the Trust will consider sanctions and may in extreme case consider legal action.



Examples of unreasonable behaviour

- Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refusing to accept that issues are not within the remit of a complaints procedure despite having been provided with information about the procedure's scope.
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt in ways, which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Making what appear to be groundless complaints about the employees dealing with the complaints and seeking to have them replaced.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds and/or denying statements he or she made at an earlier stage.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information, which the complainant expects to be taken into account, and commented on or raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting they are all fully answered.
- Electronically recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.
- Adopting a 'scattergun' approach: pursuing a complaint or complaints and, at the same time, with a Member of Parliament/a councillor/independent auditor/local police/solicitors etc.
- Making unnecessarily excessive demands on the time and resources of employees whilst a complaint is being looked into, by for example excessive contact and expecting immediate responses.
- Submitting repeat complaints, after complaints processes have been completed, essentially about the same issues, with additions/variations, which the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints, which should be put through the full complaints procedure.
- Refusing to accept the decision – repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision.
- Combinations of some or all of these.

In the event that unreasonable behaviour is experienced, the Complaint Lead will meet with the CEO/Deputy CEO and review the case. They will determine:

- That the complaint is being or has been investigated properly and policy followed;
- That any decision reached on it is the right one;
- That communications with the complainant have been adequate;
- That the complainant is not now providing any significant new information that might affect the Trust's view on the complaint.



- If satisfied on these points they should consider whether further action is necessary prior to taking the decision to designate the complainant as unreasonable or unreasonably persistent.

Further actions may be:

- If no meeting has taken place with the complainant and if they know nothing about the complainant which would make this inadvisable, consider offering the complainant a meeting. Sometimes such meetings can dispel misunderstandings and move matters towards a resolution.
- If the complainant has additional needs, an advocate might be helpful to both parties: consider offering to help the complainant find an independent one.
- Before applying, any restrictions give the complainant a warning that if his/her actions continue the Trust may decide to treat him/her as an unreasonably persistent complainant and explain why.

The precise nature of any action the CEO/Deputy CEO decides to take in relation to an unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complainant must be appropriate and proportionate to the nature and frequency of the complainant's contacts with the Trust at that time. The following list is a 'menu' of possible options for managing a complainant's involvement with the Trust from which one or more might be chosen and applied, **if warranted**. It is not exhaustive and often, local factors will be relevant in deciding what might be appropriate action.

- Placing time limits on telephone conversations and personal contacts.
- Restricting the number of telephone calls that will be taken (for example, one call on one specified morning/afternoon of any week).
- Limiting the complainant to one medium of contact (telephone, letter, email etc) and/or requiring the complainant to communicate only with one named member of employees.
- Requiring any personal contacts to take place in the presence of a witness.
- Refusing to register and process further complaints about the same matter.
- Where a decision on the complaint has been made, providing the complainant with acknowledgements only of letters or emails, or ultimately informing the complainant that future correspondence will be read and placed on the file but not acknowledged.

If a decision is taken to apply the above sanctions the Complaints Lead will write to inform the complainant that:

- the decision has been taken;



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- what it means for his or her contacts with the Trust;
- how long any restrictions will last; and
- A copy of this policy will be enclosed with the letter.

The CEO/Deputy CEO will keep a record of all contacts with unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants.

When unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants make complaints about new issues these should be treated on their merits, and decisions will need to be taken on whether any restrictions, which have been applied before, are still appropriate and necessary.

Date Adopted: February 2022

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