



Complaints Policy

Documents consulted:

This policy & procedure has been produced based on recommendations in line with:

1. Introduction

Aim of the policy

The aim of the complaints procedure is to enable families involved with The East Street Early Years to make complaints about the service they receive and have them considered.

Who may complain?

Any family member of a child attending the setting or their representative may make a complaint.

Definition of a complaint

We consider a complaint to mean:

An expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action, by the employees or East Street Early Years that requires a response.

For example, this could include:

- Unreasonable behaviour by an individual
- Poor quality of service

What is not a complaint under this policy?

Some things are best dealt with outside this complaints policy and there may be cases where other, more specific ways of resolving your concerns are appropriate (see Annex A).

In general, the following issues will be treated as part of the East Street Early Years normal business rather than as complaints:

- Queries
- Comments
- Initial requests for services
- Initial reporting of faults.

2. Responsibility of East Street Early Years Employees

East Street Early Years employees will respond sensitively and helpfully to families, and those acting on their behalf, who may express a concern.

Staff should give information about the Complaints Procedure and assist with dealing with complaints according to the procedure.

Staff must advise families who feel that they may have been subject to racial discrimination that they have the right to use the provisions of the Race Relation Act.

There should be no delay in giving this information, as there is a three-month time limit for making applications under the Act. It is of course, for the person concerned to decide whether to use that process, and it is advisable to take specialist advice before proceeding.

The Early Years Manager is responsible for ensuring the smooth working of the Complaints Procedure.

3. The Procedure

We recognise that every complaint is different and we want to investigate concerns appropriately. The following stages will normally be followed:

Stage 1

- I. If any parent/carer has cause for concern, in the first instance, we would encourage them to speak directly to the member of staff, if deemed appropriate. Most situations can be addressed at this point. If that is not possible, then speak to the manager to try and resolve the problem. If a satisfactory solution cannot be found at this stage, then a complaint must be made in writing, either by letter/email or on a Complaint Form available from the Early Years Manager.

A member of a family wishing to make a complaint should be assisted, if needed, by a friend or the Early Years Manager to formulate and express the complaint.

Staff must not refuse to accept a complaint.

- II. The letter of complaint or Complaints Form should be sent or handed to the Early Years Manager.

On receipt of a complaint the Early Years Manager shall acknowledge receipt of it, and send a copy to the Chairperson of the East Street Early Years committee. If the complaint is a letter, it should be attached to a Complaints Form with the details completed on the form. A record of the Complaints Form should also be started, each complaint is issued with a complaints number, this number should be documented on all necessary paperwork.

The Early Years Manager shall consider what steps are appropriate in responding to the complaint; these may include problem solving, reconciliation and/or negotiation. The Chairperson shall be advised of the proposed response and shall agree to it or discuss alternative responses with the Early Years Manager. A response to the complaint should be given without delay and the expectation is that this stage of the procedure should be completed, in most cases, within 10 working days.

The details of the response and the outcome of the way in which the complaint was considered should be recorded with the written complaint.

Written responses must be sent in all cases to the complainants. Further information shall be included in the written response outlining the further steps in the procedure, which can be taken if the response is not satisfactory to the Complainant.

If the Complainant is satisfied with the outcome, no further action need be taken as far as the complainant is concerned.

Stage Two

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome after the initial review, they should advise the Early Years Manager within 28 days. They will acknowledge these concerns within 5 working days. If the

complainant wishes from the start when making the written complaint to have it more formally considered; the following procedure shall apply:

- I. On receiving a reply to the response that it does not satisfy the Complainant, or on receipt of the written complaint that the Complainant wishes to go straight to this stage, the Early Years Manager shall acknowledge receipt of the reply or the written complaint, and send a copy of the record of Complaint form.
- II. The Chairperson decides on a member of the East Street Early Years Committee who shall further investigate the complaint independently of the Early Years Manager and Chairperson. Depending on the nature of the complaint and its seriousness, s/he may be joined in the investigation by another member of the East Street Early Years Committee or nominated Representative.
- III. A written report of the independent investigation shall be made and recorded with the written complaint and a copy sent to the Chairperson.
- IV. A further response to the complaint shall be drawn up taking into account the report of the investigation and shall be made by the Chairperson to the Complainant.
- V. If the Complainant is satisfied with result of the investigation and the further response, no further action need be taken as far as the Complainant is concerned.

Stage two: shall be completed within 20 working days of the commencement of the stage.

Stage Three

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the response drawn up after the investigation, the following procedure shall apply:

- I. The continued dissatisfaction of the Complainant should be submitted in writing and should be recorded. If sufficient reason for the dissatisfaction is not included in the written paper, more details of the reasons should be sought from the Complainant and recorded.
- II. A special meeting of the East Street Early Years Committee should be called. Each member of the East Street Early Years Committee shall receive a file of all the written papers concerning the complaint. The Chairperson, Co-coordinator and those involved in the investigation shall attend for the purpose of reporting and giving information, but, in the interests of natural justice, shall leave the meeting before any decision is taken. In these circumstances, the Vice-Chairperson or another person elected for the purpose.
- III. A written response shall be drawn up as a result of any decisions taken at the special meeting by the person who chaired the meeting and that response shall be recorded with the written complaint and sent to the Complainant.
- IV. **The special meeting shall be called within four weeks of the commencement of this stage and the response shall be sent to the Complainant within one week after the meeting.**

This marks the end of the complaints procedure and if the Complainant remains dissatisfied, s/he should be informed by the Co-coordinator of any other separate procedure, which may be appropriate to the case.

If we receive multiple complaints about the same issue, then in the interests of efficiency, we might consider them as if they are a single complaint. Also, in the interest of efficiency, we reserve the right not to pursue a complaint it is frivolously made or deliberately repetitious.

4. Treating your complaint fairly

We welcome complaints from all sections of the Community. Assistance can be given to those who are not comfortable with written or spoken English and complaints can be made in the person's own language, if preferred. Contact us if you'd like help with this.

When making a complaint we are committed to treating you with respect and courtesy at all times. We will deal with complaints fairly and impartially. We expect our staff to be treated with similar respect.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

The Complaints Procedure is separate and distinct from the Grievance and Disciplinary procedure.

The Grievance Procedure enables employees to raise grievances in connection with their conditions of employment and other employment matters, whilst the Disciplinary Procedure is used by the employer when an employee may be in breach of the terms of employment. It is, however, possible that the investigation of complaints may lead to disciplinary issues.

Adopted by the GFA Committee on		May 1 st 2019	
Signed by the Chair of the GFA Committee			
Last reviewed:	May 2019	Date of next review	May 2021

ANNEX A

Complaints that cannot be considered under the complaints policy

The following list includes some of the issues that cannot be dealt with under this policy. Where possible, mention is made of the appropriate process to follow:

- A complaint where the Complainant or East Street Early Years has started legal proceedings or has taken court action, but not cases where a Complainant has simply threatened legal proceedings against East Street Early Years.
- A complaint that is to be dealt with or has already been dealt with by a court, tribunal or other statutory body.
- A staff complaint about a personnel matter, including appointments, dismissals, pay, pensions and discipline (but not from staff as service users).