

Safeguarding children

1.10 Making a complaint

Policy statement

Our setting believes that children and parents 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 to the appropriate member of staff. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns. We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our setting to a satisfactory conclusion for all parties involved.

Procedures

All settings are required to keep a 'summary log' of all complaints. This is to be made available to parents as well as to Ofsted inspectors.

Making a complaint

Stage 1

Any parent who has a concern about an aspect of the setting's provision talks over, first of all, his/her concerns with the setting manager.

Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage.

Stage 2

If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent moves to this stage of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing to the setting Manager and the chair of the management committee.

The setting stores written complaints from parents within the confidential records. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, the setting manager may wish to store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint.

When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the setting manager meets with the parent to discuss the outcome.

Parents must be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of making the complaint.

When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the

Complaints Summary Record.

Stage 3

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he or she requests a meeting with the setting manager and the chair of the management committee. The parent should have a friend or partner present if required and the manager should have the support of the chairperson of the management committee, or a professional colleague, present. 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 Summary Record.

Stage 4

If at the stage three meeting the parent and setting cannot reach agreement, an external mediator 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 Pre-school Learning Alliance are appropriate persons to be invited to act as mediators.

The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. S/he can hold separate meetings with the setting personnel (setting manager and chair of the management committee) and the parent, if this is decided to be helpful. The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice s/he gives.

Stage 5

When the mediator has concluded her/his investigations, a final meeting between the parent, the setting manager and the chair of the management committee 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.

The role of the Office for Standards in Education, Early Years Directorate (Ofsted) and the Local Safeguarding Children Board

Parents may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaints 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 Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are adhered to.

The number to call Ofsted with regard to a complaint is:

0300 123 1231

We display an OFSTED 'Parents' poster which provides the complaints information.

If a child appears to be at risk, our setting follows the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in our local authority.

In these cases, both the parent and setting are informed and the setting manager works with Ofsted or the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.

Records

A record of complaints against our setting and/or the children and/or the adults working in our setting is kept, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.

The outcome of all complaints is recorded in the Summary Complaints Record which is available for parents and Ofsted inspectors on request.