

BANKS HOUSE AND SCHOOL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

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Important roles and named people

Throughout this policy, the following roles may be mentioned. It is important to know who these people are;

- The Registered Manager
 - Helen Baker (helenbaker@cascade-care.com)
- Deputy Managers
 - Julia Playle (julia.playle@cascade-care.com)
 - Sarah Barrett (sarah.barrett@cascade-care.com)
- Head of School / Head Teacher
 - Carol Ryan (carolr@cascade-care.com)

Rationale

Banks House Home and School has clear Aims, Policies and Procedures.

Both Banks House Home and School have the child's best interests and outcomes at the heart of its culture. Furthermore, this will be achieved by working closely and collaboratively with all Banks House staff with regard to the homes and schools policies and procedures.

This policy is made available to both children and parents on request. An easy read version is available within the Children's Guide.

1 - Representations

Children and young people should be positively encouraged and supported to have their say and make suggestions about improving the care they receive, the running of the home or school, or to make representations and comments about their future plans.

Staff should engage, when appropriate, children and young people in the day to day running of their lives and routines of the home and school, and in activities that are being planned.

If decisions are made e.g. about an activity, that children or young people express concerns about or disagree with, staff should do all they can to ensure that a reasonable explanation is given, and that children/young people have the opportunity to opt out or be engaged in a different activity - if it is possible for them to do so.

This includes decisions about routine activities, such as meal preparation, bedtimes and educational activities; children and young people should have the opportunity to discuss how decisions are made about these and other routines on a regular basis, and to make suggestions for change. These suggestions should be encouraged at young people's meetings Star Reviews and in more formal meetings such as LAC reviews

At all times, staff should try to avoid matters or concerns being escalated or becoming complaints, but should children and young people continue to be dissatisfied, they should be given the opportunity to make an Informal or Formal Complaint - as set out below.

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2 - What is a complaint

Complaints or allegations of mistreatment or Significant Harm by staff must be dealt with by way of the **Referring Safeguarding Concerns Procedure**, not as Complaints.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, the actions, or lack of action by the home towards an individual or a group.

A complaint should normally be made where all other reasonable methods of resolving the dissatisfaction or niggle have been tried and failed or where the complainant believes the issue was not being taken seriously or resolved.

When all other reasonable methods of raising an issue or niggle have been unsuccessful, the next step might be to make a complaint

A complaint may be about:

- The lack of or appropriateness service
- Needs (physical emotional and or practical) are not being appropriately met
- Being refused a service, including an assessment
- The attitude or behaviour of staff
- Decisions made by staff
- Delays in dealing with problems or in providing a service.
- The impact of the service or the children that live within it, on an external party

The complainant should be advised that complaints can always be directed to the social worker, Placing Authority or Regulatory Authority.

3 - Who may make a complaint

The following persons have a right to use the complaints procedure:

- A child;
- A parent of a child;
- A person acting on behalf of a child;
- A neighbour living in the locality.
- A member of the public
- A member of staff

4 - Informing children about the complaints procedure

Children will be informed about the Complaints Procedures in a variety of ways; including the Children's Guide given to them before or upon admission. **This must be in a format that the child can understand.**

This must include the name and telephone number of the Regulatory Authority in the area where the home is based. Other relevant organisation and persons details should also be included.

The Registered Manager /Head teacher must take all reasonable steps to ensure that children feel comfortable with the making of comments or complaints, they are enabled to make a complaint or representation and are free from reprisals if they choose to do so.

Complainants should be given any reasonable assistance they require or request, including being advised that they may ask someone else to make the complaint on their behalf.

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They will also be given information and contact details of Advocates they may contact, who may make complaints or advocate on their behalf or assist them in doing so.

The child's parents and the Placing Authority must be given a copy of the complaints policy. This complaints policy is available to all persons working in the Home or School.

If they request it or it appears appropriate, they should be given information on additional advocacy or support networks which may help them use the procedures effectively; this should include providing contact details.

5 - Receiving complaints

When children indicate they wish to make a complaint, the person receiving it should do what they reasonably can to ensure that all other resolutions available have been tried, rather than resorting to the making of a formal complaint.

Where a person insists that they wish to make a formal complaint, staff or managers in the home or school concerned should still deal with the matter, if appropriate. If a complaint is made about the manager of the home or Head Teacher or another person in Line management, it should be passed to a manager outside of the Line Management Structure. No person who is the subject of a complaint will take any part in its consideration, other than at the local resolution stage (Stage 1), if appropriate.

If they wish to do so, complainants may direct their complaints to others outside the home, such as the Independent Advisor, Regulatory Authority or the Placing Authority.

Complaints should preferably be put into writing, in a letter or using a Complaints Form; but other methods may be used, including the use of audio tapes or verbally. **For young people with communication difficulties, appropriate communication tools must be used to allow them to voice their concerns**, for example the use of PECS.

Details of all complaints must be recorded in the Complaints Log.

6 - Local resolution (stage 1)

Timescale: 14 Days from the receipt of a Stage 1 Complaint/Informal Complaint

If possible, the person receiving the complaint or their supervisor/line manager should resolve the matter as soon as reasonably practical and in any event within the timescales at the start of this section unless agreed in writing by the Complainant.

This assumes that the person receiving the complaint has the delegated authority to resolve the matter satisfactorily and the Complainant agrees that it can be dealt with at this stage. If not, or if the matter isn't resolved satisfactorily, it must be passed to the Registered Manager / Head Teacher for consideration at Stage 2 - see below.

If it is possible to resolve a complaint in the required timescale (see the start of this section), the person resolving it should do the following:

Note the fact that an informal complaint was made and resolved in the Complaint Log, record a summary of the complaint and the manner in which it was resolved in the Complaints Log and in the progress notes of any relevant child. The Line Manager/Senior Teacher must confirm in writing to the complainant the agreed resolution;

If the Line Manager/Senior Teacher was not involved in resolving the matter, notify the Line Manager/Senior Teacher as soon as practicable.

The Manager/Head Teacher should then consult the complainant to ensure they are satisfied, brief their Line Manager/ Senior Teacher if necessary and record it in the Complaints Log.

7 - Local resolution (stage 2)

Timescale: 28 Days from the receipt of a Stage 2 Complaint.

NOTE: Any serious complaints must be notified to the Placing Authorities and the Regulatory Authority, who may wish to advise or be consulted about the formal process.

Matters that must be considered at this stage are:

- Stage 1 Complaints that are not resolved satisfactorily;
- Where the manager of the home does not have the appropriate level of authority to resolve the Complaint;
- Where the Complainant has requested a Stage 2 Investigation.

Stage 2 Complaints must be referred to the Registered Manager/Head Teacher

Before undertaking the Formal Consideration, the Registered Manager/Head Teacher should clarify the substance of it with the complainant, put it into writing and give a copy to the complainant.

The complainant needs to be informed that they can be accompanied, if they wish.

If the complaint relates to a child in the home, the social worker should be consulted.

The Registered Manager / Head Teacher should attempt to resolve it as quickly as possible but within the timescales stated at the start of this section unless agreed in writing by the Complainant. If the timescales are extended, the Regulatory Authority must be informed of the reason for the delay.

The complainant should be notified of the outcome of the complaint, preferably verbally, but always in writing. If the complaint was justified, the complainant should be told what, if any, remedial action will be taken and an apology offered.

Details of the outcome must be recorded in the Complaints Log, which must be countersigned by the Registered Manager / Head Teacher. Copies of all records and correspondence relating to the complaint should be kept as follows:

- On any relevant child's file;
- In the Complaints File held by the Registered Manager / Head of School;
- Copy of outcome must be sent to the Regulatory Authority;
- Copy of outcome must be sent to the Placing Authority.

8 - Review panel (stage 3)

Timescale: 28 Days from the receipt of a Stage 3 Panel.

If dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 Formal Investigation, complainants may request a Stage 3: Review Panel to consider their complaint; they may also ask that their complaint be passed to the Placing Authority or Regulatory Authority.

To instigate a Stage 3 Panel, the complainant should notify the Registered Manager/Head Teacher either verbally or in writing; the notification will be confirmed in writing explaining the process and timescales for undertaking a Stage 3 Review Panel.

The Registered Manager / Head Teacher will ensure that:

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- Senior managers, Head Teachers and relevant social workers are notified and briefed as necessary until the matter is resolved;
- The complainant is clear about the process and timescales;
- The complainant has access to an independent advocate or representative;
- A Panel is established to consider the matter; the Panel will consist of 3 people that are independent of the matter being considered, one of the Panel members will be asked to Chair the Panel and report to the Registered Manager/ Head Teacher on the recommendations that are made;
- Necessary arrangements are made for the Panel to be convened and conducted in a fair manner;
- The recommendations of the Panel and properly considered, involving senior managers as necessary, and that any decisions or actions are acted upon promptly;
- The complainant and his/her advocate/representative are briefed verbally and in writing of the outcome.

9 - Appeals Process

If the complainant is still not happy with their response, The School Advisory Board will then, if deemed necessary, request that the complainant writes to The School Advisory Board giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the appeal panel.

The Head Teacher/ Director of Education will at this point seek the support of one of their Associate Schools to put together a new panel.

The appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process and is not convened merely to rubber stamp a previous decision.

10 - Confidentiality

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

The written records will state whether they are resolved with a formal or informal procedure, and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (whether upheld or not).

A copy of any findings and recommendations that are made have to be made available to the complainant, and where relevant the person complained about.

This needs to be available for inspection on the school's premises for the proprietor and the Head Teacher

11 - Compliments

We welcome comments, both positive and critical about the service we provide, and actively seek information and feedback under our review and quality of care procedures. Routinely, we seek information through consultative questionnaires from all professional bodies, Children and their parents/carers who have knowledge about the service. The purpose of seeking this information is to give us the opportunity to learn, adapt and provide a better service.

The Registered Manager and Head Teacher monitors the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis. S/he also reports to the School Advisory Board on the effectiveness of the policy and, if necessary, makes recommendations for further improvements.