The Pathway Fund
How to make a complaint
For Pathway clients

Introduction

The Pathway Fund is committed to providing its customers with the highest levels of service. However, we are aware that from time to time they may be unhappy with the service provided. To deal with this, we have a Complaints Procedure. We believe that complaints can help us see where our services or procedures might be improved, even if the customer feels that their concern does not amount to a ‘complaint’, we still want to know about it. This document sets out how you can make a complaint about the Pathway fund.

Scope of this policy

This policy covers the administration of the Pathway Fund only; for any other complaint related to the Early Years Organisation, the organisation’s complaints policy should be used.

Please note that if you wish to complain about a funding decision then you should use the appeals process. A copy of the appeals process is available on our website or by contacting the Pathway team.

Definition of a complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction delivered in writing or orally, whether justified or not, from, or on behalf of a person or company, about the Pathway Fund

Common types of complaint

- Maladministration e.g. unreasonable delays, mistakes or omissions in carrying out Pathway grant processes
- Rude or unhelpful staff
- Failure to follow up on instructions or requests
- Data protection breaches
- Failure to supply information or giving wrong or incomplete information
- Discrimination or unfair treatment

Aim of the complaints procedure

1. To provide an effective means of allowing customers to complain about the quality or nature of services.
2. To ensure those complaints are acted upon and recorded.
3. To seek to resolve complaints quickly and as close to the point of service as is acceptable and appropriate.
4. To ensure that responses to complaints are informative and comprehensive.
5. To give management an additional tool to monitor the overall performance of the fund and the extent to which its service objectives are being met.

**Assurance**

Clients should note that making a complaint will not disadvantage the client in any way when making a current or future application to the Pathway fund.

A copy of this procedure is available on the Pathway Fund page on the Early Year’s website.

**How to make a complaint**

**Informal complaints**

You can speak to any member of the Pathway team if you have any dissatisfaction with the Team or the Fund. The team member will try to resolve your complaint immediately or will pass on the matter to a more appropriate colleague who will contact you to deal with the issue as soon as possible and not more than two working days after you raise the issue. If the matter is resolved at this stage then no further action will be taken. However the Pathway team may keep a record of your complaint to assist in improvement of the service.

However if your complaint is not resolved informally you may decide to make a formal complaint following the process below. Please note that you can ask to bypass the informal complaint process above and proceed directly to a formal complaints process if you want.

**Formal complaints**

You can make a formal complaint verbally, by telephone or in writing to the Pathway Team by ringing the Pathway Team number on 02890662825 or by emailing thepathwayfund@early-years.org.

The formal complaints process has the following stages:

**Stage 1** Pathway team member who receives the complaint will log your complaint including date, contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint. If your complaint was received verbally or by telephone you will receive an acknowledgement by email. If the complaint is received by email you will receive an acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint. You will receive the acknowledgment within 2 working days.

Your complaint will be investigated by the Pathway Fund Operations Manager who may contact you to gather further information. At the completion of the investigation a
A member of the Pathway team, deemed to be most able to help resolve the issue(s) raised, will contact you with the intention of reaching a resolution. Contact will be by phone although you can ask for email contact if you would prefer that. This contact will be as soon as possible after the complaint is made but at maximum within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.

**Stage 2** It is hoped that the complaint will be dealt with at stage 1 however if you are not satisfied you can ask for the complaint to be taken further. At this stage the Pathway team will involve the Director of Early Years. The Director will consider the original complaint, any investigation that took place by the Pathway team, the attempt to resolve the complaint at stage 1 and any other relevant information. They may contact you to gather further information. They will then contact you with the intention of reaching a resolution of the issue. This contact will be made within 10 working days of the complaint passing through stage 1.

It is hoped that the complaint will be resolved at stage 2 however whether it is or not this is the final stage in the internal complaint’s procedure. If you still wish to bring the complaint further you may take the matter to the Department of Education Early Years Team.

Please note that in exceptional circumstances if the complaint is particularly complex and/or requires lengthy investigation it may take longer than the timescales stated above. However, if this is the case you will be kept informed of progress.

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**Our standards for handling complaints**

- You can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times. We expect that you will also treat our staff dealing with your complaint with the same courtesy, respect and fairness.
- We will treat your complaint in confidence within Early Years.
- We will treat all complainants equally in accordance with the organisations equal opportunities policy.

Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, subject to the need to disclose information as required by statutory authorities, and/or as a result of statutory, legal or parliamentary obligations placed on the Pathway Fund.