

The Children's Lodge Complaint Policy

An effective comments and complaints policy is a crucial part of promoting quality childcare. Although complaints are difficult to receive and respond to, acting on a complaint promptly can help upgrade service quality.

Even where every effort is made to meet quality standards, those who use a childcare service may not, at times, feel satisfied with the type, level or quality of the service that is provided.

The aims of this policy are to ensure that:

- Anyone who comes into contact with the service will be assured that if they ever have a comment to make or need to make a complaint it will be welcomed and responded to appropriately.
- Parents/carers are informed about the Comments and Complaints Policy and procedure at registration/enrolment.
- All staff members are aware that if they receive a complaint there is a specific procedure in place for dealing with it.
- Complaints are taken seriously and resolved efficiently and effectively.

The Children's lodge is committed to providing a quality service to children and their parents/carers and we regularly evaluate our services in order to measure the standard of our performance.

While this is always our aim, we accept that sometimes things do not always go to plan. In such circumstances, we want to know so that we can put the problems right and learn from our mistakes.

We welcome all comments on our services, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

The Children's Lodge gives a commitment to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. All complaints will be dealt with seriously and sensitively to ensure that the standard of service provided by The Children's Lodge is maintained at a high level.

Any complaints made will be dealt with in an open and impartial manner according to the following procedures.

- The procedure will be kept as simple as possible and every effort will be made to address the issue informally before moving to a formal procedure. Under normal circumstances. The Supervisor, Sinead Brady will be responsible for managing formal complaints.

- Where a complaint concerns a staff member, The Children's lodge will address the situation with due regard to its obligations as an employer and the rights of the employees, the terms governing their conditions of employment and the procedures outlined in the staff handbook.
- All complaints made to staff – both formal and informal – will be recorded in detail and Sinead Brady will be informed immediately.
- The complaint will be investigated and a written response will be sent within 14 working days. We will always respect confidentiality.
- If a complaint is made against the Supervisor, then the matter will be passed to the Cork County Childcare Committee for advice.
- In the event of errors being made, we will undertake to correct them as quickly as possible and to give an explanation and, where appropriate, an apology.
- The evaluation of the outcome of the complaint will form one of the considerations for future policy and practice.
- Any parent/carer can, at any time, ask for access to our complaints file.

Procedures & Practices

The Children's Lodge is committed to open and regular communication with parents/carers. We welcome all comments on our services, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

A complaint can come to the attention of the service in a number of different ways:

Contact, by phone or in person, with a staff member or by letter and email.

The complaint may be made by the person directly affected or by a person acting on their behalf.

Stage One

If a person has a complaint about some aspect of the service's activity, or about the conduct of an individual member of staff, it will often be possible to resolve the problem by simply speaking to the individual concerned and/or to the Supervisor.

Some complaints may fall more into the category of disagreements or differences of opinion, and may be resolved through discussion and compromise on the part of both the person making the complaint and the staff member.

In the first instance, those who wish to make a complaint are encouraged to speak directly to the relevant member of staff. If they do not want to do this, they can speak with the Supervisor who will try to resolve the problem by putting the complaint/concern in writing, discussing it with the relevant member of staff, asking that staff member to put their

response in writing. The Supervisor will then investigate the matter and revert back to the party who made the complaint/concern. The details of the complaint/concerns and the response will be recorded.

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be found, then Stage Two of the procedure will formally come into operation.

Stage Two

If discussions of a complaint or problem have not produced a satisfactory resolution to the situation, those making the complaint should put their complaint in detail, and if possible in writing, to the Supervisor using the form attached to this policy. All necessary support will be provided. Relevant names, dates and any other important information on the nature of the complaint should be included.

The Children's Lodge will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing as soon as possible – within three working days at least – and fully investigate the matter within 15 working days. If there is any delay, those who made the complaint will be advised of this and offered an explanation. The Supervisor will be responsible for sending them a full and formal written response to their complaint.

The Supervisor, with the assistance of appropriate staff members, will carry out a full investigation. This may involve:

- Interviews with all relevant individuals/copies of their concerns/response
- Minute taking of all meetings
- Individuals being informed that they may have an appropriate individual present with them during the investigation.

The Supervisor may also inform the relevant bodies that the investigation is taking place if deemed necessary.

If the Supervisor has good reason to believe that the situation has child protection implications, they should inform the designated Child Protection Officer and ensure that the local TUSLA is contacted, according to the procedure set out in the Child Protection Policy. If any party involved in the complaint has good reason to believe that a criminal offence has been committed they should contact An Garda Síochána.

The formal response to the complaint will be sent to the person who made the complaint and copied to all relevant members of staff if appropriate. The response will include recommendations for dealing with the complaint and any amendments to the service's policies or procedures emerging from the investigation.

The Supervisor will arrange a time to meet the person who made the complaint to discuss the complaint and the service's response to it. The Supervisor will judge if it is best for all parties to meet together or if individual meetings are more appropriate. The person who made the complaint will be asked if they would like to meet with the person first.

If at the conclusion of this process those who made a complaint are dissatisfied with the response they have received, the original complaint along with the service's response will be kept on file in school and passed to the relevant bodies.

The Supervisor will at all times try to meet with the person who has made the complaint/or who has voiced concerns so that the matter can be resolved in a satisfactory manner. It is the policy of the The Children's Lodge to meet with parents and discuss a resolution.

Making a Complaint to TUSLA

If the situation is still unresolved, the person who made the complaint will be informed of their right to make a formal complaint to the TUSLA. If they would like to make a formal complaint to the TUSLA, the form is filled out and they are informed about where to send it.

Communication Plan

All parents/carers are to be informed of the policy and procedures regarding Comments and Complaints on registration. Staff members will check with parents that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy is kept on file in school and is available for parents should they require it. Staff are informed of all policies and procedure. These policies are kept up to date and are reviewed annually.

A copy of all policies will be available to staff members and parents in the Policy Folder located in The Children's Lodge.

Parents/carers may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents/carers and staff will receive written notification of any updates.

Related Policies and Procedures linked to this policy:

- Confidentiality/Information Sharing Policy
- Records and Record Keeping Policy
- Grievance and Discipline Policy and Procedures
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Communication Policy
- Staff Development and Training Policy
- Comments and Complaints Form

Appendix A

Serious Complaint

The following are examples of serious complaints (this list is not exhaustive) which will require a formal response and cannot be dealt with only through informal discussion:

Violation of Children's Rights

- Child abuse (physical or sexual)
- Use of corporal punishment
- Unacceptable disciplinary techniques, e.g. shaming, humiliation, withholding food or toileting privileges, locking child in closet/bathroom

Health and Safety Violations

- Gross unsanitary practices/conditions, e.g. presence of faeces/urine, improper food handling, lack of hand washing before and after food handling/nappy changing
- Broken/shattered glass or other sharp objects
- Poisonous plants/household chemicals where children can access them
- Complaints alleging that children have been left alone or in the care of person(s) who have not been Garda vetted
- Numbers of children over the required ratio
- Presence of medications unlocked and accessible by children
- Presence of seriously damaged/broken toys or equipment
- Presence of illegal drugs/staff member intoxicated

Discrimination

- Any action (written or verbal) alleging discrimination regarding a child and/or family based on: gender, race, religion, colour, national origin, age, ability, disability, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, parents' marital status, membership of the Traveller community

Allegations of Fraud

- Any attempt to falsify records

Appendix B

Complaint Form

Please complete all sections of this form using block letters.

Name:

Address:

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Phone number:

Date of incident:

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Name of person you were dealing with:

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Details of Complaint:

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Please continue on an additional sheet if required.

Signature: Date:

Please return to: Sinead Brady, Supervisor, The Children's Lodge

Read by the Supervisor

Signature: Date:

Response and Actions

Issue/s

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Actions (Include dates)

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Communication with the person/s who made the complaint

(include copies of all correspondence including emails, letters, dates & times of phone calls)

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Evaluation

Issues and Policies/Procedures that require the supervisor/owner review:

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Signed Supervisor/Owner: Date

The Children's Lodge Montessori School **Child Collection Procedure**

- Children may only be collected by persons named on the registration form.
- Parents/career must notify the staff in person or in writing if another person is to collect the child. If this person is not known to staff members, they will be asked for identification.
- Children must be collected on time.
- Parents are requested to park in the designated drop-off and pick-up areas. Parking is provided at the rear of the school. (in the Clinic)

The Children's Lodge Montessori School **Complaints/Comments Policy**

It is the policy of this service to encourage and welcome complaints/comments made by any person involved with our service and to act on these complaints to the best of our ability and in an efficient, competent and timely manner.

Complaints/Comments Procedure

- All persons involved in our service are encouraged to comment on or make complaints regarding our service, both positive and negative.
- A register of complaints is maintained.
- Once a complaint is registered the manager is immediately informed and appropriate action taken.

*updated August 2017
Reviewed SBead
2/9/19*

Policy on Parent Involvement- The Children's Lodge Montessori School

We at the Lodge welcome Parental Involvement. We believe that:

- Parents have rights and schools will have to be accountable to them.
- Parents can have a positive influence on their children's attainment and progress in school, by the attitudes they themselves display, and the support they give.
- Parental Involvement in school may help to avoid conflicting behaviour between home and school and minimise confusion for children.
- Parental Involvement in school may enhance parental knowledge, skill and confidence.
- Parent-Professional partnerships may enhance teacher's knowledge, skill and confidence.
- Parent Involvement in school can be an effective way of building support for teachers and the school.
- Parents need to have feedback on their child's development so Sinead Brady will make a point of meeting with parents and letting them know how their child is getting on.
- If there is a problem or we have a concern about a child Sinead will arrange a meeting with parents at a time that is suitable to them. Parents are encouraged not to come alone as some parents may need support. Parents will be shown observations/evidence of our concerns in school by Sinead and they will be assured of confidentiality at all times.

We at the Lodge believe in an open door policy. As parents, you will be welcomed at all times in our school. We value and respect your ideas/suggestions/input into our school. We will respect your values/beliefs/parenting styles and culture. We believe that partnership with parents is an integral part of good practice in our service. We are committed about the ways in which parents can contribute to their children's education and improve the quality of their children's experience in our school. We have clear policies and procedure in place and every parent will be given a copy when their child starts with us. Please be assured that your child is in a safe and caring environment with fully qualified childcare staff. We operate to a very high standard. We work under the guidelines of the Childcare Act 1991, Childcare Regulations 1996 The Department of Education (Pobal) and TULSA-Child and Family Agency. We adhere to/follow the guidelines/principles and themes set out in Siolta 2006 and Aistear 2009.

updated August 2017
Reviewed by SBrady
2/9/19

The Children's Lodge Taking to Parents Policy

Difficult conversations will be easier if you have worked at having an open atmosphere, encouraging parents to be part of things, asking for their views and ideas and having clear procedures for everyone to respond complaints and concerns.

At the Children's Lodge we ensure that we:

- Create a welcoming atmosphere for parents in our service
- Ensure that all staff are friendly to parents
- We think about time and place when we need to have a serious conversation with parents.
- We always step out of the room and find a quiet space.
- Our conversations start with the positives about the child.
- We ensure that parents know that we care for their child and recognise their strengths
- We start with the positives about the parent, most parents are trying to do their best for their children and need that acknowledgement.
- We take the approach that we are working together to address any issues for the best result for the child.
- We never blame, get defensive or take things personally
- We ensure that we are supportive but also address the issue.
- We make plans and follow through –
- We ensure feedback to parents.

***Please note that this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.**

*Reviewed by SBAD
2/9/19*