



Complaints Policy and Procedures (External/Young people) December 2025

Introduction

At Highlands Group, we understand we may not always get things done in a way or manner that satisfies everyone, or indeed we may at times get things wrong. In either event we would seek to rectify this promptly. The aim of this policy is to guide and direct any person who feels dissatisfied with any aspect of our work at Highlands Group in making a complaint. This policy is aimed at people who are not employed at Highlands Group; employees are directed to our grievance policy.

Policy Statement

Highlands Group welcomes any feedback, whether positive or negative, as a necessary tool in improving the work we do. We operate a Complaints Procedure which is freely available and easy to use. All complaints, whether formal or informal, big or small, will be taken seriously and a resolution will be sought in a timely manner.

All complaints are recorded with actions taken, outcomes achieved and learning points. Each homes registered manager monitors all complaints and ensures they are dealt with promptly.

Who May Make a Complaint?

This complaints procedure may be used by any person (other than employees) who feel they are dissatisfied with the actions or inactions of any person employed by Highlands Group. This includes children in our care, parents, social workers and relatives of children, and members of the public.

Whenever a person is dissatisfied with any actions or omissions by a member of our staff or management, they should use these procedures.

What Is a Complaint?

Not every concern is a cause for complaint. A child or another person may have a concern and need reassurance from a member of staff. If, however, they are dissatisfied with the response, they should use the complaints procedure.

Highlands Group takes all complaints seriously and will seek a prompt solution. In most cases we would hope the complaint would be dealt with informally through good communication. However, there may be

occasions when a person wishes to make a formal complaint. In these cases, the following procedures apply.

If an individual is concerned that a child is at risk of abuse or neglect at one of our homes, they should not use the complaints procedure but instead ask to speak with the home manager or Responsible Individual immediately. If they are still concerned or dissatisfied with any response, they should contact Ofsted or the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) on the numbers below:

Ofsted: 0300 1231231

Local Area Designated Officer (LADO): 01962 876364

Complaints Procedure

Making A Complaint

Any person other than an employee may make a complaint, either formally or informally (employees should follow the grievance procedure or refer to the Whistleblowing Policy).

Informal Stage

Whenever a person is dissatisfied with an action by anyone at Highlands Group or if they are dissatisfied by a staff member's failure to act, they should in the first instance approach the staff member concerned or the manager of the home and raise the matter informally. At Highlands Group we take all complaints seriously and any complaint will be heard and dealt with promptly.

Formal Stage

Having raised their dissatisfaction with the staff member or manager, if the person is not satisfied with the response, or if they feel the matter needs to be dealt with formally, they should use the formal complaints procedure.

The person with the complaint may make their dissatisfaction known in writing by letter, email or by requesting a Complaint Form (see Appendix 1 External Complaint Form, and Appendix 2 Child/ Young Person's Complaint Form). Complaints should be given or emailed to the Registered Manager, or Deputy Manager. (If the complaint is about the Registered Manager/Deputy Manager then the complaint can be sent to the Responsible Individual).

The manager receiving the complaint will make a record of the nature of the complaint and will advise the complainant of the next steps in seeking a resolution. These procedures show a timetable for dealing with complaints. In all cases the person receiving the complaint will record the following:

- The nature of the complaint, what has occurred or what didn't happen which should have happened?
- When did this occur?
- What would the complainant like to see happen to resolve the issue?

Dealing with A Complaint from A Child

At Highlands Group, children are encouraged to have a voice and raise any worries or concerns they may have. Children have the right to make complaints without fear of reprisal, and to know that they are listened to. We have easy-to-use children's complaints forms (Appendix 2). The Staff member will offer this form to the child and will support them as much as they require to complete the complaint form. They

will assure the child that they will inform the manager and the manager will respond to them promptly. We use easy-to read response forms for the manager's response (Appendix 3). In all cases we will ensure the child is listened to and will feed back the outcomes of their complaint and where necessary provide ongoing support, reassurance and dedicated keywork sessions to ensure the child feels safe and secure in all aspects of their daily living. Where necessary, all our forms can be amended to provide bespoke individualised forms to ensure the voice of the child is heard.

Children and young people also have visual 'Worry Forms' where they can share low-level worries they have so that these can be resolved quickly before they escalate further. Children can also voice concerns in regular catch up meetings and in Keywork sessions.

All Worry Forms and children's Complaints forms MUST be shared with the Home Manager and all members of SLT immediately.

If a child raises a complaint about the Home Manager, the staff member receiving the complaint must share this with the Responsible Individual (or other member of SLT in their absence) immediately. Should a child raise a concern about the Responsible Individual, the member of staff receiving the complaint should raise this to the Registered Manager immediately. There is a protocol in place where the complaint can be shared with the Company Directors, to whom the Responsible Individual is accountable. A telephone number is included on all staff payslips. If the complaint is about another member of SLT, the complaint should be shared with the Registered Manager and Responsible Individual immediately.

In the absence of the Home's Registered Manager, please refer to the Safeguarding On-Call rota and ensure all members of SLT are included in the information sharing.

Dealing with A Complaint from an Adult

The person receiving the complaint (usually the Registered Manager or Deputy Manager) will record the details mentioned above and will investigate the concern in a timely manner. They will also complete the Complaints Log and complete a Complaints Tracker form which they will use to monitor the progress of the complaint. The investigating manager will respond to the complainant within 48 hours and will as part of their investigation focus on what, if anything, could have been done better.

Following the investigation (which would normally be completed within 5 working days) the investigating manager will make a recommendation as to what needs to happen and will respond to the complainant with the outcome within 10 days. If the complaint investigation is particularly complex this can be extended to 28 days, but this would not be the norm and the investigating manager will inform the complainant of the delay.

Appealing the Decision

Once the outcome of the complaint has been shared, the complainant is able to appeal if they are dissatisfied with this. Appeals should be made to the Responsible Individual with the reasons for their dissatisfaction.

The Responsible Individual will respond, informing the complainant of the receipt of their appeal within 48 hours and give them the timescales for dealing with their appeal.

Once the Responsible Individual has investigated the appeal (which would normally be completed within 5 working days) the Responsible Individual will make a recommendation as to what needs to happen and will respond to the complainant with the outcome, again within 10 days.

Equally the Responsible Individual may need to extend the timescale if the nature of the complaint and appeal is complex, but in most cases, it would be completed within the 10-day timescale. The Responsible Individual will inform the complainant of the delay which should not exceed 28 days.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied, they may make a formal complaint to the regulatory body, Ofsted.

Ofsted: 0300 1231231

Timescales For Responding to Complaints

Stage	Action	Who	Timescale
Informal Complaint	Discussion and Resolution	Staff member or Manager	Immediate
Formal Complaint	Acknowledgement of receipt	Manager or Deputy Manager	48 hours
	Investigation	Manager or Deputy Manager	5 working days
	Inform complainant of outcome	Manager or Deputy Manager	Ideally within 10 working days, but certainly within 28 days
Appeal	Acknowledgement of receipt	Responsible Individual	48 hours
	Investigation	Responsible Individual	5 working days
	Inform complainant of outcome	Responsible Individual	Maximum 28 days

Monitoring and Review

To ensure its effectiveness, this Policy will be reviewed after 12 months by the management team.

Appendix 1: External Complaint Form








Please describe your complaint giving as much detail as possible (including full names, job roles, and dates if known)	
What would you like to see happen to resolve the issue?	
Complainant Name:	Complainant Signature:
Date Complaint Raised:	Reference Number:
Staff Receiving Complaint:	Date Complaint Received:

Please give or email this form to the registered manager or deputy manager. You will receive an initial response within 48 hours and your complaint will be thoroughly investigated.

If your complaint is about the Registered or Deputy Manager, please give or email the form to jackiesmeeth@highlands-group.co.uk.

Appendix 2: Child/ Young Person's Complaint Form

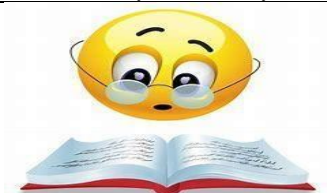
My Name	Date
 I am unhappy and want to make a complaint about:	
	
A Person	Home
	
School	Something else
I am unhappy about: 	
It would make me happy if: 	

I gave my form to:

Your Name

Date

We read your complaint



Together we discussed



What we decided to do



What was the outcome



Appendix 3: Complaint Response for Child/ Young Person's Complaint

Ref no:	Log Page:		Date Opened:			
			Date Closed:			
Complaint passed on to:						
Manager	Social worker		Advocate	Parent	Responsible Individual	