

<b>DAWN HOUSE SCHOOL – STAFF HANDBOOK</b>	
<b>Policy Title: Complaints Policy</b>	
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## **1. Why do we have a complaints policy?**

- 1.1 We welcome feedback on any aspect of our work, including complaints, comments, compliments and suggestions. This policy covers complaints only.
- 1.2 Comments, compliments and suggestions are welcome through the following:
  - In person by talking with the relevant manager, team or service staff
  - By email to the relevant manager, team of service staff
  - Via telephone to the relevant manager, team of service staff
- 1.3 Whilst we always aim to get things right first time, we know that on occasion we may not. If we make a mistake, we will be open and honest about it as soon as possible. We will tell you about our mistake, explain why we think the mistake was made, and tell you how we will do our best to ensure it doesn't happen again. This applies if you are a child or young person, parent or carer, volunteer, supporter or partner.
- 1.4 If you are thinking about making a complaint, but aren't sure if you want to, talk to any Speech and Language UK member of staff. They can tell you more about how complaints are dealt with.
- 1.5 Speech and Language UK is positive about receiving complaints and views them as an opportunity for us to get things right. We are committed to learning and continuous improvement. We use information about mistakes and complaints constructively to reflect, learn, monitor and improve our performance.

## **2. Who can complain using this policy?**

- 2.1 This policy is intended for children and young people who use our services, parents or carers of the children and young people who use our services, our volunteers, partners and supporters.
- 2.2 This policy is also available on our schools' websites and the main website for Speech and Language UK for anyone to access at
- 2.3 If you don't want to make a complaint yourself, you can ask someone, such as a parent or friend, to make a complaint on your behalf. First, we will need to be sure you have asked them to raise your concern (we will need this in writing from you). Then, we can talk with them about the complaint and agree the best way to communicate with you (as the complainant) throughout the process.
- 2.4 We will provide advocacy support for any young person or vulnerable adult if required.

### **3. What can you complain about?**

- 3.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the work of Speech and Language UK or our two schools.
- 3.2 This policy sets out Speech and Language UK's process for responding to complaints. The process is intended to be as clear, fair, consistent and timely as possible.
- 3.3 If you are a child or young person receiving support from us today and have concerns about your own safety or protection (safeguarding concerns), please tell a member of staff immediately. You can also give us your details via this email address: [safeguarding@speechandlanguage.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@speechandlanguage.org.uk)
- 3.4 Any parent/carer of a child at one of our schools with any safeguarding concerns should speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the respective schools. More information on this can be found on the schools' websites and [here](#) at Speech and Language UK.
- 3.5 All other safeguarding concerns should be made to the Charity's designated safeguarding lead, their contact details can be found [here](#).
- 3.6 If you are unhappy about how the school or charity is asking for money, please tell a staff member right away so they can help you fix the problem

### **4. What constitutes a serious complaint?**

- 4.1 The Charity Commission for England and Wales defines a 'serious' complaint as one concerning an action that could cause 'serious risk of harm to the charity or the people it was set up to help'. They provide the following list of such actions -
- a charity not following the law, with damaging consequences to its reputation and public trust in charities generally.
  - serious harm to the people the charity helps or other people who come into contact with the charity through its work.
  - a person or organisation unlawfully receiving significant financial benefit from a charity.
  - criminal, illegal or terrorist activity.
  - a charity set up for illegal or improper purposes.
  - a charity losing significant amounts of money.
  - a charity losing significant assets, for example land or buildings

### **5. What is not covered in this policy?**

- 5.1 This policy is not for Speech and Language UK members of staff. Staff with a complaint should follow the relevant policy below:
- Whistleblowing Policy
  - Grievance Policy
  - Safeguarding Policy
  - Managing allegations of abuse by a staff member or volunteer

## **6. Key principles of this policy**

- 6.1 We encourage children and young people who use our services, their parents/ carers, our volunteers, partners and supporters to tell us if they aren't happy with our work. We will treat anyone making a complaint with dignity and respect. We will take your concerns seriously.
- 6.2 Our policy and procedures regarding complaints are clear, open and honest. We take extra care to make the complaints process as simple and straightforward as possible for the children and adults we work with.
- 6.3 Complaints will be resolved as swiftly, and as far as possible, informally, by those who are responsible for the relevant area of work. Whenever there is a delay for whatever reason, we will let you know quickly and tell you when you will hear from us next.
- 6.4 An annual report will be prepared for Trustees outlining the number, type and learning from these complaints.
- 6.5 All staff will approach any complaint with an open attitude.
- 6.6 Through the implementation of this policy and procedure, we will ensure there is a fair, clear and consistent process which sets out three stages for considering complaints. This includes, as far as possible, a consistent contact person who will update you throughout the process.
- 6.7 We will respect confidentiality throughout the process. Only those involved in looking into the complaint will know about it.
- 6.8 If you need help to make a complaint, please get in touch with us by any of the channels listed in point 1.2 of this policy and we will help you to find the right support needed for you to make your complaint.
- 6.9 If you need extra support as the result of a mistake we have made, we will help you get that support. If we cannot provide the help you need ourselves, we will help you source it elsewhere.
- 6.10 If you decide you want to withdraw your complaint, you can do so at any time.
- 6.11 Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be necessary to report it to the Charity Commission. In such cases, the Board of Trustees has delegated the authority to the CEO to handle this process.
- 6.12 The CEO will notify the Trustees whenever a report has been made to the Charity Commission.
- 6.13 A complaint about an employee or volunteer working with children, young people or adults at risk may arise via Speech and Language UK's complaints process. Following an initial Stage 1 investigation (in accordance with Speech and Language UK's complaints policy and process), the complaint may raise an allegation or concern about potentially harmful behaviour towards a child, young person or adult at risk. Whenever this occurs, the Managing Allegations policy will then take precedence, thereby suspending the complaints process.

## **7. How to complain**

7.1 A service user or other stakeholder can make a complaint in the following ways:

- In person by talking or emailing with the relevant manager, team or service staff.
- Via telephone to general enquiries number on 020 7843 2515 Regardless of your method of contact, we will follow the same process.
- If you are unhappy about how the school or charity is asking for money, please tell a staff member right away so they can help you fix the problem.

## **8. Making sure our complaints policy is effective**

8.1 We want our complaints policy to be effective. We will monitor and review complaint information to make sure that the correct procedure has been followed.

8.2 All complaints will be logged and monitored through a central register, held by us at Speech and Language UK. Speech and Language UK Board of Trustees retain oversight of complaints as part of the charity's governance. They will make sure we are learning from complaints and making any necessary changes to the way we work.

8.3 At Speech and Language UK, we take complaints made through our social media channels seriously. We are committed to responding to all complaints received via social media and encourage individuals to continue the conversation offline, where we can initiate stage one of the complaints process.

8.4 This document may be reviewed at any time at the request of management but will automatically be reviewed every three years or sooner in response to new national guidance and/or legislation.

## **9. Vexatious Complaints**

9.1 We define unreasonably persistent and vexatious complaints as those which, because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contacts with the Speech and Language UK or one of our schools, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints. The description „unreasonably persistent“ and vexatious“ may apply separately or jointly to a particular complaint.

9.2 We will ensure that the complaint is being, or has been, investigated properly according to the complaints procedures, but in circumstances where unreasonable complainant behaviour is present, restrictions may be imposed as set out below.

- Where the complainant tries to reopen an issue that has already been considered through the complaints procedures, they will be informed in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed
- Where a decision on the complaint has been made, the complainant should be informed that future correspondence will be read and placed on file, but not acknowledged, unless it contains important new information

- Limiting the complainant to one type of contact (for example telephone, letter, email, etc.)
- Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with staff per week or month
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff and informing the complainant that if they do not keep to these arrangements, any further correspondence that does not highlight any significantly new matters will not necessarily be acknowledged and responded to, but will be kept on file
- Assigning one officer to read the complainant's correspondence, in order to ensure appropriate action is taken
- Offering a restricted time slot for necessary calls to specified dates and times
- Requiring any face to face contacts to take place in the presence of a witness and in a suitable location.

## **10. Speech and Language UK has a three stage complaints procedure**

### **10.1 Stage 1: Local resolution**

- Wherever possible, complaints will be resolved swiftly and informally by the relevant manager/Principal. If the manager/Principal is involved in the complaint, we will ask another independent manager.
- Where a safeguarding concern is raised via a complaint process, Speech and Language UK's safeguarding policy will be followed. A staff member will talk about this with you if your complaint involves a safeguarding issue.
- It is our aim that all Stage 1 'local resolution' complaints will be resolved 10 working days after we receive the complaint. If we are unable to resolve the complaint in this timeframe, we will tell you as quickly as possible and let you know when you can expect to hear from us.

### **10.2 Stage 2: Appeal**

- If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 complaint, please write to us to tell us why you are unhappy within 14 days of receiving notification of the Stage 1 outcome.
- A relevant independent staff member (appointed by the Director in charge of the work area) or a member of one of our School Advisory Boards (SAB) will be assigned to review the complaint appeal. This will initially involve considering reasons for the appeal and deciding if further review is required.
- If further review (known as an 'investigation') is required, an investigating officer will be appointed. We aim to complete the investigation as quickly as possible. We will keep you informed as our investigation progresses and tell you how long we estimate the process will take.
- We will give you our decision in relation to the appeal, including any findings and conclusions which led to the decision, in writing.

### 10.3 Stage 3: Final Appeal

- If you remain dissatisfied following a Stage 2 investigation, please tell us in writing that you remain unhappy within 14 days of receiving the written Stage 2 decision notification.
- We will assign a senior manager to consider your appeal as quickly as possible.
- The final appeal stage will involve both a reconsideration of the original complaint and a review of how Speech and Language UK's complaints policy and procedure was applied.
- The outcome of the final appeal will be provided in writing to the complainant (person making the complaint).
- Stage 3 final appeal decisions are final.

### 11. Options after appeal

11.1 The Charity Commission regulates registered charities in England and Wales. They make sure that charities are accountable, well-run and meet their legal obligations. The Commission will receive complaints related to suspected serious abuse or illegal activity at a charity. Further information is available on the government site, using [this link](#).

11.2 Any Speech and Language UK supporter making a complaint about our fundraising activities, who is dissatisfied with the outcome or response times, can (after four weeks from making an initial complaint) refer their complaint to the Fundraising Regulator via telephone on 0300 999 3407 or via this website:

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints/make-complaint>.

You can also complain to the Fundraising Regulator if you have a complaint about the way you have been asked for donations or how fundraisers have behaved.

11.3 The Information Commissioners Office is The UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, making people aware about their data protection and information rights. If you have a concern about Speech and Language UK practices, you can report it directly via telephone on 0303 1231 113 or on their website: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

11.4 If your unresolved complaint is regarding the school, you can contact the Department for Education and/or Ofsted using this link <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

### 12. Confidentiality, GDPR and data protection

12.1 This policy complies with the requirements of The Equality Act (2010) and is in accordance with Speech and Language UK's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

12.2 We will only tell those people involved in resolving your complaint about it. Sometimes we may need to share your complaint or concerns with other individuals to understand the situation fully. If you are a child or young person making a complaint, we will talk with you about any concerns we have for your well-being that might make it necessary to tell any other adults.

12.3 After the complaint is resolved, we will keep a summary on record, using relevant data protection protocols.

12.4 We use anonymised information from complaints to make sure we learn and improve our services.