

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedures

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1. Purpose and Context

Kids places a strong emphasis on providing the highest quality service possible. We welcome and value all feedback, positive and negative, as this enables us to listen, learn and to improve what we do. The following policy sets out Kids arrangements for people wishing to comment on, compliment or complain about Kids people and/or its services.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To improve the quality of Service User's experience.
- To ensure that all complaints and suggestions are promptly addressed, resolved and shared within the agreed timescales to ensure lessons are learnt and the learning improves service quality and delivery.
- To ensure colleagues at all levels within Kids understand their roles and responsibilities with regard to handling complaints, suggestions and compliments.

2. Scope

This policy is relevant to and should be followed by all people working for or on behalf of Kids.

The policy relates to children, young people and their parent carers or legal guardians who receive, request or are affected by Kids services. It also applies to members of the public, partners, professionals, commissioners and suppliers.

Comments, compliments and complaints can be in relation to the quality and performance of services, the conduct of people employed by or acting on behalf of Kids or Kids environments, systems and resources.

2.1 Out of scope

- I. This policy **does not** apply to Kids colleagues– this includes employees, workers, agency workers, students, volunteers, contractors, consultants or trustees. These groups should make their compliments and comments known to their line manager or persons to whom they consider their compliments / comments are most relevant. Colleagues are encouraged to use Kids internal communication system Viva Engage to acknowledge and praise colleagues for their efforts and contributions.
- II. In the event that a colleague wishes to raise a concern or make a complaint, they should refer to the relevant Kids policies e.g. Grievance Policy or Whistleblowing Policy.
- III. This policy does not apply to complaints that must be dealt with by specific employment procedures or statutory processes, including but not restricted to allegations of professional misconduct, criminal offences or those that are potentially colleague disciplinary issues. Allegations / complaints relating to such matters will be moved out of the complaints handling procedure and dealt with under the relevant internal Kids procedures.

- IV. Where a complaint or concern is raised that relates to a Service User being harmed or likely to be harmed, the organisation will follow the relevant Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, seeking advice and guidance from the Local Authority Safeguarding Children's or Adults team. Kids will also notify Ofsted, CQC and/or Charity Commission in line with our statutory duty.
- V. Complaints relating to data / information breaches should be investigated through the Data Protection Breach Reporting Policy.

3. General Policy

3.1 Compliments and Suggestions

Kids welcomes compliments and suggestions and recognise their importance in celebrating and recognising the success of our service and opportunities for improvement. We will engage with a wide range of stakeholders in addition to Service Users to support service development and improvement. We will share feedback with our colleagues.

3.1.1 Compliments

A **compliment** is an expression of satisfaction about a service the Service User has received. Compliments are positive feedback that can be received verbally or in writing and can include expressions of praise, admiration, congratulation and encouragement. Compliments can be received at any time by email, letter, thank- you card or in person.

Receiving compliments is an opportunity to celebrate and recognise success. Kids will ensure that:

- All compliments are shared with colleagues and displayed in public area to highlight good practice
- Compliments are anonymised or permission sought before displaying
- Numbers of compliments received are logged as part of a quality assurance programme
- Verbal positive feedback from service users is also deemed as compliments and should be recorded and shared with colleagues
- Compliments form a core agenda item and where relevant service user meetings

Compliments provided through informal methods should be logged, collated and reviewed as part of regular (formal) feedback analysis to help identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Services are encouraged to use the Kids You Said – We Did Template to record compliments and action taken in response to these. This can be accessed from Kids intranet page.

3.1.2 Comments / Suggestions

Comments and/or suggestions can be made verbally or in writing and generally are in response to seeking feedback as a means of changing practice for the better.

Suggestions are not complaints but, in some circumstances, if they are not actioned could lead to a complaint.

When suggestions are raised in meetings, as part of a conversation, or in writing, these should be documented and then outcomes of such suggestion recorded to show consideration. This can be recorded in Kids You Said, We Did Template.

Colleagues should be encouraged to share their suggestions or suggestions received by service-users or other relevant stakeholders to their line manager.

Service Managers should consider implementing a suggestions system to encourage comments from Service Users at any time outside of formal feedback cycles such as surveys, service review meetings or evaluations.

3.2 Concerns and Complaints

A concern may be defined as *“a worry or something that might bother someone about a service and where advice might be needed for a resolution”*. Concerns are often described as ‘niggles’ or ‘moans’.

A complaint is defined as *“an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more individuals about the standard of service, action taken or lack of action by Kids or someone acting on behalf of Kids”*. In short, any expression of dissatisfaction with Kids will be recognised and handled as a complaint.

Kids recognises that there will be times when we make mistakes, get things wrong or fail to meet service users' expectations. Where this happens and where we receive an expression of concern or dissatisfaction, we will always take this seriously, treat it as a complaint, record and report on it internally (and externally if required) and deal with it in a timely manner.

We will ensure Kids complaints handling procedure is made available and accessible to children, young people, parent carers, partners and members of the public and that they feel free to raise matters of concern without risk of retribution or disadvantage.

Our aim is to resolve concerns and issues of dissatisfaction as close to the initial point of contact as possible and to conduct thorough and fair investigations of complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of each individual case.

We will always take steps to maintain the confidentiality of personal information throughout a complaints process. We will only disclose it to people who have a legitimate reason to look into a complaint.

3.2.1 Nature of complaints

Complaints can be in relation to the quality and performance of services, the conduct of people employed by or acting on behalf of Kids or Kids environments, systems and resources. Appendix 1 provides a framework of complaints as a guide to the type of issues and concerns that can be progressed through Kids complaints system. (This is not an exhaustive list).

Please note:

- I. If the nature of a complaint alerts you to any possible abuse or neglect of a child or adult at risk you must report it immediately to your Local Kids Safeguarding Lead and inform your Head of Service. The Safeguarding Lead / Senior Manager will progress the complaint through Kids safeguarding procedures.
- II. If the nature of the complaint or investigation process alerts you to any possible illegal activity, gross negligence or misconduct it must be immediately referred to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). If the complaint concerns a senior manager (Head of Service) the complaint should be immediately referred to the ELT. If the complaint concerns members of the ELT the matter should be referred to the Chair of Kids Board of Trustees. Appendix 2 contains contact details for complaints handling.
- III. If the nature of the complaint relates to an incident causing a service user severe harm or death it must be immediately referred to ELT and progressed in line with the following two policies: Accident, Incident and Near Miss Policy and Duty of Candour Policy.

Kids is not able to respond to a complaint where the:

- Person making a complaint has not identified themselves or provided contact details
- Complaint is not about Kids
- Complaint is insufficiently clear
- Complaint has been sent to Kids and other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email
- Kids has already considered the matter and given a final decision following an investigation into the complaint.

Where possible and relevant Kids will still take the complaints seriously and deal with them appropriately, including contacting the person making the complaint where we are able to, to discuss the matter further.

3.2.2. Complaints from third party representatives

Sometimes individuals may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint on their own. Kids will accept complaints from a third-party representative under certain conditions, as follows:

- Where it is known the service-user has consented and given written authority to Kids for the third party to act on their behalf
- Where the service user cannot complain unaided and cannot give consent because they lack capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2019
- The representative is acting in the service user's best interests – for example, where the matter complained about, if true, would be detrimental to the service user

Complaints made by a third party with the explicit permission of the complainant will be dealt with according to the same procedures and timescales.

Third parties **must not** be a legal representative of the individual making a complaint.

Kids will provide details of national and local advocacy services on its website and/or provide such information where necessary to ensure people requiring assistance are able to access Kids complaints procedure. Local advocacy service information can also be issued to new service users when they start with Kids or at any point thereafter.

3.2.3 Anonymous complaints

Complaints submitted anonymously will be considered if there is enough information in the complaint to enable Kids to make further enquiries. If, however, an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information, we may decide not to pursue it. Kids may consider the issues raised and will record the complaint so that corrective action can be taken as appropriate.

Any decision not to pursue an anonymous complaint must be authorised by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). If an anonymous complaint contains serious allegations, it should be referred to the ELT immediately.

3.2.4 Complaints involving more than one service or department

If a complaint relates to the actions of two or more projects, teams or departments, the manager of the team/department receiving the complaint must confer with the other area(s) to decide who will take the lead on the complaint. The complainant will be told to whom the complaint is being passed and given their contact details. Coordination may be required between different services / departments to ensure that the complaint is fully addressed in a single response. The nature of the complaint may also require parallel procedures to be initiated (such as referral to colleague disciplinary procedures).

3.2.5 Complaints involving other organisations or contractors who provide a service on behalf of Kids

If an individual complains to Kids about the service of another organisation, which Kids is not involved in, the individual should be advised to contact the appropriate organisation directly.

Where a complaint relates to a Kids service and the service of another organisation the complaint must be handled through Kids complaints handling process in the first instance. In particular, the same timescales will apply. This relates to complaints that involve services provided on behalf of Kids. If enquiries to an outside organisation in relation to the complaint are required, care must be taken to comply with GDPR legislation and the guidance on handling personal information.

3.2.6 Time limit for making complaints

Complaints should be submitted within twelve months of the incident or concern arising. The time limit, however, can and should be waived, if:

- It is still practical and possible to investigate the complaint (records still exist and the individuals concerned are still available to be questioned) and
- The complainant can demonstrate reasonable cause for delay in making the complaint. It is at the discretion of the manager of the service if the time limit can be set aside.

This will take account of the time limit within which a member of the public can normally ask the Ombudsman to consider complaints, which is twelve months from when the person first became aware of the issue about which they are complaining.

3.2.7 Managing unreasonable complaints and/or unacceptable behaviour

Very occasionally, a complainant will behave in a way that is considered unacceptable. In these cases, Kids may restrict or deny further access to the complaint handling procedure because of:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour, or because of
- Other types of unreasonable behaviour such as excessive levels of contact

Where necessary, we will make reasonable adjustment for a special educational needs and/or disability and will take this into account as appropriate before making any decision to restrict or deny further access to the complaint handling procedure.

If action to restrict or deny access to the complaint handling procedure is deemed necessary, we will advise the complainant of this. Reasonable attempts will still be made to investigate the complaint though contact with the complainant may be restricted.

The personal safety of Kids colleagues must never be compromised. Complaint meetings (either by telephone, virtual platform or in person) should always be brought to an end in circumstances where the complainant becomes aggressive, abusive or displays a high level of distress. If possible, the decision to end a meeting should be explained clearly and politely, so that the complainant does not feel that they are being dismissed or their complaint ignored. Unless it is clearly inappropriate to do so, they should also be informed that it may be possible to continue the conversation at a future meeting when they are less distressed.

In any case where a meeting is terminated because of the conduct of the complainant, the person liaising with the complainant or leading the complaint investigation should make a file note of what occurred and bring the matter to the attention of their relevant Director. The Director will review the case and may decide that personal contact with the complainant is to be discontinued. The Director will inform the complainant in writing that the complaint may only be pursued further by written correspondence.

If correspondence is predominantly abusive or threatening, it is acceptable not to reply to it and simply leave the correspondence on file with a note explaining why a reply has not been sent. All such correspondence should be brought to the attention of the relevant Director, who will review the case and may decide to respond to the complainant explaining that the tone of their correspondence is unacceptable and that no further correspondence will be entered into unless the complainant amends their tone.

In extreme cases, for example, where there are direct and credible threats, or sexual, racial or otherwise potentially actionable abuse towards a colleague the matter will be referred to the relevant Director and referred to the police.

3.2.8 Reasonable adjustments and accessibility

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by the services of Kids has the right to access the complaint handling procedure. Kids will seek to make reasonable adjustments to enable complainants with specific needs to make a complaint as easily as possible.

A summary version of this policy is available for parent carers, and a similar user-friendly version is being produced for young people. These are available on the Complaints Handling page on Viva Engage.

3.2.9 Handling complaints on social media

Social media provides an outlet for people to express their views and experiences of services if they feel they are not being seen or heard through other channels. Because of the nature of social media being such a public and open space it is important to keep on top of any negative comments posted.

Complaints made on social media should be dealt with where possible, according to the same procedures and timescales. Appendix 3 contains guidance on how to handle complaints posted on social media sites. Additional advice and support can be obtained from Kids Fundraising Team / Marketing and Promotions via Viva Engage or directly contacting the team.

Please Note: Colleagues must not discuss individual complaint cases in a public or semi-public forum, even if a complainant has chosen to raise it there initially. Discussions should always be taken off-line.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

All Colleagues: Compliments, comments and complaints can be made any time to any colleague. All colleagues must, therefore, be aware of this policy and how to handle and record such events, in particular complaints. They should also be aware of whom to refer a complaint to if they are not able to handle the matter personally. Colleagues must report all complaints to their line manager or another relevant senior manager if their line manager is not available or the complaint concerns their line manager.

Service Managers / Co-ordinators will be aware of their authority to attempt to resolve any complaints they may be called upon to deal with, at the front-line resolution stage.

Kids Leadership Team will maintain overall responsibility and accountability for the management of the complaints handling procedure ensuring mechanisms are in place to ensure a consistent approach to the way complaints are handled, reported, monitored and reviewed. The Leadership Team is also responsible for investigating complaints and providing Kids final position and sign off on a complaint investigation. The Leadership Team should ensure that complaints are used to identify process and service improvements, ensuring improvements are implemented, and that learning is fed back to the wider organisation as appropriate.

Executive Leadership Team: The ELT provides leadership and direction to Kids. This includes ensuring that there is an effective complaint handling procedure with a robust investigation process which demonstrates that organisational learning is in place. The CEO delegates responsibility for the procedure to the Leadership Team and receives assurance of complaints performance by way of regular reporting. The ELT are responsible for managing high risk complaints, approving extensions to complaint investigations and carrying out stage 3 appeals and escalation processes.

Training on this policy and procedure will be given during induction and updated through line manager briefings.

Failure to comply with this policy may lead to disciplinary action which could include summary dismissal or as grounds to terminate your contract with Kids.

5. Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP)

5.1 Overview

Kids has a three-stage complaints handling procedure (CHP).

- Stage 1 Frontline Resolution seeks to resolve straightforward complaints quickly and effectively at the point at which the complaint is made. Front line complaints should be completed within 14 working days.
- Stage 2 Complaint Investigation is appropriate where attempts at Frontline Resolution have failed, or where the issue is sufficiently complex, serious or high risk from the outset that Frontline Resolution would not be appropriate. Stage 2 investigations should be completed within a maximum of 28 working days, unless an extension is given for good reason.
- Stage 3 Complaint Appeal is available in the event complainants are unhappy with the outcome of a Stage 2 investigation or how it was managed. Stage 3 Appeals are carried out by the Executive Leadership Team. Stage three should be completed within 10 working days.

Complaints can be received directly by front line services or via an on-line Customer Complaints Form on Kids website. There is a dedicated email account for complaints which is managed by the Complaints team. This is used by complainants in the event there is a breakdown of communication with colleagues managing complaints or, as an alternative to completing the on-line complaint form.

The CHP is supported by a national reporting tool. This records key information about complaints and is used for analysis and reporting (quarterly and annual). A range of guidance and template letters are available for colleagues to use to support complaint handling.

Further advice and practical help can be accessed by emailing complaints@kids.org.uk and / or visiting the Complaints Handling page on Viva Engage.

5.2 Stage 1: Frontline Resolution

Anyone who has a complaint is encouraged to raise it with the department or service area in which the issue arose and as soon as they become aware of it. Complaints at this stage are most likely to be made face-to-face, by phone, in writing, by email or social media. People can also complaint on-line via Kids website using the Customer Complaints Form (see section 6.1).

The purpose of frontline resolution is to attempt to resolve complaints which are relatively straightforward and require little or no investigation as quickly as possible. Complaints at this stage can be managed by a Service Manager, Co-ordinator or Grade 5 equivalent.

Colleagues should consider the following questions when they receive a complaint:

- Is this a complaint or should the individual be referred to another policy and procedure?

- What specifically is the complaint (or complaints) about?
- What outcome is the complainant hoping for and can it be achieved?
- Is this complaint straightforward and likely to be resolved with little or no investigation?
- Can the complaint be resolved on the spot by providing an apology /explanation / alternative solution?
- If I cannot help, can another colleague assist in seeking a frontline resolution?
- Do I need to escalate the complaint to a more senior manager?
- What assistance can be provided to the complainant in taking this forward?

Resolution may be achieved by providing an on-the-spot explanation of why the issue occurred and/or an apology, or other action to resolve the matter. Where possible, complainants should be offered an explanation of what will be done to stop the incident happening in the future.

Front line resolution complaints should be recorded on Kids National Complaints Handling Log using Complaints Form Stage One (A). This records key information about the nature of the complaint and the person/s making it.

A Complaint Handling Prompt Sheet is available for colleagues to download as a guide when discussing and taking down details about a complaint. This is contained in Appendix 4. The prompt sheet enables services / departments to hold information about a complaint locally while they are in the process of managing it. It also ensures key information is captured for the purposes of the National Complaints Handling Log.

5.2.1 Timelines at Stage 1 Frontline Resolution

The following deadlines will be used for cases at the resolution stage of the CHP:

- Confirmation we have received the complaint. This is an automated response via on-line customer complaints form; services should email confirmation within 1 working day.
- Acknowledgement of complaint in writing within three working days (*Template Letter 1*). This is more formal and includes information about what we understand the complaint to be about – checking we have got it right before we go off and action or investigate. It explains who will be leading on the complaint and timescales.
- Outcome - Kids will provide a full response to the complaint as soon as possible but not later than 14 working days from the time that the complaint was received (*Template Letter 2*)

(Template letters are provided in Appendix 5)

Frontline resolution should normally be completed within fourteen working days, though a resolution may be achieved more quickly. In exceptional circumstances a short extension of time may be necessary to increase the possibility of resolving the complaint at the frontline resolution stage. Where an extension is required, this must be agreed by a Head of Service or Department. The complainant must be told, in writing, of the reasons for extending the deadline and advised of the new timescale for resolution.

Please note: National guidance recommends completing frontline resolution cases within 5 working days. Kids apply a longer period to allow time to contact and consult with sessional / part time colleagues about events relating to complaints.

5.2.2 Closing the complaint at the Frontline Resolution stage

The outcome of the complaint should be communicated to the complainant in person, by phone, or email. In all cases, Managers should follow up any resolution in writing such as a friendly email/letter confirmation of what was agreed, *e.g. so sorry to hear you were unhappy with x, as we discussed on the phone, I've arranged for y and I hope that resolves things for you.*

Once a decision has been issued, the Manager should wait 10 working days for a response from the Complainant. The complaint must be updated on the National Complaints Log using Complaint Form Stage One (B). The complaint is then closed. If the complainant is unhappy with the proposed resolution, the complaint can be escalated to stage two complaints investigation.

Appendix 6 contains a diagram illustrating the procedure to follow for front line resolution complaints.

5.3 Complaints requiring investigation

A complaint will be moved to the investigation stage when:

- Frontline resolution was attempted, but the complainant remains dissatisfied. This may be after the case has been closed following the frontline resolution stage
- The complainant refuses to recognise or engage with the frontline resolution process and is insistent that the issue be addressed by a more senior colleague
- The issues raised are complex and will require detailed investigation
- The complaint relates to issues that have been identified by Kids as high risk or high profile

Special attention will be given to identifying complaints considered high risk or high profile, as these may require particular action and direct input from the Executive Leadership Team. Potential high risk /high profile complaints may involve:

- A death or terminal illness
- Involve serious service failure, for example major delays in service provision or repeated failures to provide a service
- Generate significant and on-going press interest
- Pose a serious operational risk to Kids
- Present issues of a highly sensitive nature
- Issues relating to a senior manager
- Illegal activity / gross misconduct

5.4 Stage 2: Complaint Investigation Procedure

Kids will allocate the complaint to Service Manager or higher depending on the risk threshold of the complaint. Medium risk complaints will be allocated to a Head of Service for investigation. High risk complaints will be allocated to a member of the Executive Leadership Team or Board of Trustees. See table 1: Complaint Threshold levels. The stage two complaint investigation procedure is followed for both medium and high-risk complaints.

It is important to be clear from the start of the investigation stage exactly what is being investigated and to ensure that both the complainant and the investigator understand the scope of the

investigation. It is recommended a virtual or face to face meeting is arranged to discuss and clarify the complaint. In discussion with the complainant, three key questions should be considered:

1. What specifically is the complaint (or complaints)?
2. What does the complainant hope to achieve by complaining?
3. Do the complainant’s expectations appear to be reasonable and achievable?

The Complaints Handling Prompt Sheet can be used to guide discussions and record stage two complaints investigation meetings.

If the complainant’s expectations appear to exceed what Kids can reasonably provide or are not within Kids power to provide, the complainant will be advised of this as soon as possible to manage expectations about possible outcomes.

Stage 2 complaints should be recorded on the National Complaints Handling Log using Complaints Form Stage One (A) – this records basic information about the nature of the complaint and the person making it.

Please note: There is no need to complete Complaints Form Stage One (A) if the complaint has been through the frontline resolution stage as this information has already been recorded in the national complaints handling log. Managers leading complaints will be able to obtain information about unresolved front-line complaints either from the national log or person initially assigned to respond to the complaint.

Table 1: Complaint Management Thresholds

Threshold level	Description	Action	Name given in complaints procedure
Low	<p>Complaint is straightforward; can be resolved on the spot or quickly by providing an apology /explanation / alternative solution.</p> <p>Requires little / no investigation.</p> <p>Can be easily resolved within 14 days at front line with minimum oversight / involvement of senior manager.</p>	Complaint can be managed by a Co-ordinator with oversight from a Service Manager or Head of Service	Complaints Resolution Manager
Medium	<p>Issues raised are complex or of a sensitive nature and will require more than 14 days to investigate and resolve.</p> <p>Complaint is about a service / senior manager.</p>	Complaint must be managed and investigated by a Head of Service	Complaints Investigation Manager

High	Complaint relates to high risk / profile issues. Complaint is about a member of the leadership team.	Must be escalated to CEO or Board of Trustees	Serious Case Investigation Manager
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5.4.1 Timelines at Stage 2 Complaint Investigation

The following deadlines will be used for cases at the investigation stage of the CHP:

- Confirmation we have received the complaint. This is an automated response via on-line customer complaints form; services should email confirmation within 1 working day.
- Acknowledgement of complaint in writing within five working days (*Template Letter 3*)
- Complaint meeting completed within 10 working days of receiving the complaint
- **Outcome** - Kids will provide a full response to the complaint as soon as possible but not later than 28 working days from the time that the complaint was received for investigation. (*Template Letter 4*)

5.4.2 Extension to the timeline

Not all investigations will be able to meet the 28 days deadline; for example, some complaints are so complex that they will require careful consideration and detailed investigation beyond the 28 working days timeline. Where there are clear and justifiable reasons for extending the timescale, senior management will exercise judgement and will set time limits on any extended investigation, with the agreement of the complainant. If the complainant does not agree to an extension but it is unavoidable and reasonable, then senior management must consider and confirm the extension. In such circumstances, the complainant must be kept updated on the reason for the delay and given a revised timescale for bringing the investigation to a conclusion. It is expected, however, that this will be the exception and that Kids will always strive to deliver a definitive response to the complaint within 28 working days. The complainant should be informed in writing of the extension.

Where an extension has been agreed, this will be recorded and the proportion of complaints that exceed the 28 working day-limit will be monitored through the complaints reporting system.

5.4.3 Closing the complaint at the Complaint Investigation stage

The outcome of the investigation should be formally communicated to the complainant in writing. The conclusion of the investigation, outcome, action taken and details of how and when it was communicated to the complainant must be recorded on the National Complaints Reporting Tool using Complaints Form Stage Two. The complaint should then be closed. If the complainant is unhappy with the proposed resolution, the complaint can be escalated to stage three appeals.

Appendix 7 provides a process flow for managing Stage two complaint investigations.

5.5 Stage 3: Complaint Appeals and Escalation

If, at any time the complainant is unhappy with an investigation of the complaint or the response, the complaint will be referred to the Executive Leadership Team for review.

Complainants have a right to refer their complaint externally to professional bodies or regulators if they are unhappy with the process or outcome. These are listed in Appendix 9.

Appeals and escalation processes should be included in service user guides and contained in the Stage 2 Complaint Decision Letter.

The conclusion of the Appeals process, action taken and details of how and when it was communicated to the complainant must be recorded on the National Complaints Handling Log using Complaints Form Stage Three.

Appendix 8 contains a process flow diagram for Stage 3 Appeals handling.

6. Complaints Handling System

Kids has a structured complaints handling system for recording complaints, their outcomes and any resulting action. The complaints system includes:

- Kids Complaints Handling Process Flows for Stages 1, 2 and 3.
- On-line Customer Complaints Form (accessed via Kids website)
- On-line Complaints Handling Forms (1a, 1b, 2, 3)
- Complaints Handling Prompt Sheet (downloadable document)
- National Complaints Handling Log
- Template Letters
- Local Government Ombudsman Poster
- Making a Complaint Guide for Parents and Carers

The system ensures Kids can record complaints consistently and in sufficient detail and manage them in line with Kids timelines and procedures. It also enables Kids to carry out national analysis and reporting for quality assurance and continuous improvement purposes.

All colleagues are required to join the Complaints Handling page on Viva Engage. This stores all forms, letters, process flows, guides and posters for the complaint handling system. The four main complaints handling forms are pinned to the right-hand side of the Viva Engage page for ease of access.

6.1 Kids Customer Complaints Form

A person can make a complaint via Kids website by completing an on-line Customer Complaints Form and attaching any relevant documentation. Appendix 10 contains a process flow for complaints received through the website. A copy of the Customer Complaints Form is shown in Appendix 11.

The Customer Complaints Form is automatically entered into the national complaints handling log. The complaints handling log generates a Unique Customer number (UCn) for the complaint and sends an email alert to the complaints team notifying them a complaint has been received via the website.

The complaints team forwards the complaint to the relevant department/ Head of Service for action together with the UC number and any supporting documentation. The UC number must be entered for each subsequent entry to the national complaints handling log.

Appendix 10 contains a process flow for how complaints are received and handled via Kids website. Appendix 11 contains a copy of the Customer Complaint Form.

6.2 Kids National Complaints Handling Log (CHL)

The national complaints handling log (CHL) is managed by the Complaints team. Information on the CHL is restricted to the Head of Complaints and relevant complaints investigation managers in order to safeguard and protect complaints information.

There are four different forms that colleagues will be required to complete at different stages of handling a complaint.

- Complaints Form Stage One (A) – this records basic information about the nature of the complaint and the person making it and must be completed for all new complaints - both stage one front line resolution and stage two complaints investigation. The form enables colleagues to categories complaints from a pre-determined drop down menu.
- Complaint Form Stage One (B) – this records the action taken to resolve a stage one front line resolution complaint. It also records the complainant's satisfaction with the outcome.
- Complaint Form Stage 2 – this records the conclusion of the stage 2 complaints investigation including final outcome, action taken and details of how and when it was communicated to the complainant. It also records the complainant's satisfaction with the outcome.
- Complaint Form Stage 3 – this records the conclusion of a complaint appeal including final outcome, action taken and details of how and when it was communicated to the complainant.

The on-line complaints forms can be accessed from the Complaints Handling page on Viva Engage.

The four complaints forms automatically enter complaints information into the national complaints handling log. The complaints handling log sends an email alert to the Complaints team each time a complaint is up-dated. It also notifies the Complaints team if a complaint needs to be escalated to stage 2 investigation or stage 3 appeals.

A Complaint Handling Prompt Sheet is available for colleagues to download as a guide when discussing and taking down details about a complaint. This is contained in Appendix 4. The prompt sheet enable services / departments to keep a live running record of a complaint while they are managing it and ensures key information is captured for the purposes of the national complaints log.

The complaints handling log gives each new complaint a reference number. This is generated when the **Complaints Form Stage One (A)** is completed. The complaints handling log emails the reference number to the Complaints team who in turn forwards to the relevant manager. You must enter the same reference number for all subsequent up-dates / forms completed in relation to the same complaint. This enables the national log to record a complaint as a continuous line of information should it need to be progressed through complaints handling stages 2 and 3.

6.3 Kids Template complaints letters

Kids has created a number of template letters for issue at different stages of the complaints handling procedure. These are contained in Appendix 5 and can be downloaded from the Complaints Handling page on Viva Engage.

Colleagues / teams should use the template letters to ensure compliance with national guidance. The template letters are as follows:

- Template Letter 1 - Acknowledgement email for Stage 1 Front Line Resolution complaint
- Template Letter 2 - Complaints Outcome – Stage 1 Front Line Resolution
- Template Letter 3 - Acknowledgement letter – Stage 2 Complaint Investigation
- Template Letter 4 - Decision Letter - Stage Two Complaints Investigation

6.4 Reporting of complaints

Services/ departments should carry out regular monitoring and analysis of complaints to identify and implement improvements where required. The Complaints team will generate regional complaints reports for this purpose.

Complaints will be collated nationally and reported quarterly to the Executive and Leadership Teams and at least annually to the Board of Trustees. This demonstrates Kids approach to improving its activities on the basis of complaints and will assure our service users, stakeholders, partners and members of the public that we value their complaints.

The Complaints team will be responsible for preparing quarterly data reports for senior management and an annual Complaints Report.

The annual report will be made available to external stakeholders including commissioning authorities and regulators such as Ofsted and CQC in line with contract and registration requirements. Services will be responsible for producing complaints information / reports for local contracting purposes.

7. Definitions

A **compliment** is defined as “a statement of positive recognition or praise for a service, team or individual”

A **comment** (or suggestion) is defined as “a remark, observation or criticism that may require immediate action but does not require a full investigation”

A **concern** may be defined as “a worry or something that might bother someone about a service and where advice might be needed for a resolution”

A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more individuals about the standard of service, action taken or lack of action by Kids or someone acting on behalf of Kids”

CHP abbreviation stands for Complaints Handling Procedure

CHL abbreviation stands for Complaints Handling Log

UCn abbreviation stands for Unique Customer number. This is the reference number that the national complaints handling log generates for each complaints received via the on-line Customer Complaints Form

8. References

8.1 Legislation, regulations and national guidance

- Good Governance: A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Ofsted frameworks for the regulation of Early Years provision and Children's Homes
- Children's Homes National Minimum Standards
- Care Quality Commission, Guidance about compliance
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman national guidance for complaints handling

8.2 Associated documents and guidance

- Accident and Incident Reporting Policy and Procedures
- Duty of Candour Policy and Procedures
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures
- Grievance Policy and Procedures
- Data Protection Breach reporting Policy
- Ethical Fundraising Policy
- Safeguarding Policies (children and adult)

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Complaints Categories

Appendix 2 - Contact details for complaints handling.

Appendix 3 - Guidance on handling complaints on social media sites

Appendix 4 - Complaints Handling Prompt Sheet

Appendix 5 - Template Letters

Appendix 6 - Stage 1 Front-line Resolution Complaints Handling Process Flow

Appendix 7 - Stage 2 Complaints Investigation Handling Process Flow

Appendix 8 - Stage 3 Complaints Appeals Handling Process Flow

Appendix 9 - Complaints escalation - details of external organisations

Appendix 10 - On-line Customer Complaints Form Process Flow

Appendix 11 – Stage 3 Complaints Appeal Report Template

Appendix 12 - Trustee Notification Form

Appendix 1: Complaints Categories

1. Service Issues

Delays/waiting times
Cancellations
No service
Insufficient staffing/availability
Transport issues
Parking issues

Lack of respect of culture/ diversity / identity
Prejudice/ Discrimination
Poor behaviour management
Coercion / Intimidation
Disregard of needs and preferences
Damaged belongings /property

2. Access

Accessibility
Availability of places
Delivery times/days
Appointment issues
Not accepted / admitted
Off rolling / excluded

6. Information

Inadequate information
Inaccessible information
Incomplete / inaccurate information
Misinformation

3. Colleague skills and conduct

Colleague commitment / motivation
Incompetence / negligence
Unsuitable colleague
Inexperienced/untrained
Inappropriate / unprofessional conduct

7. Contact & Communications

Lack of contact / communication
Language problems
Communication delays
Unreturned calls/emails

4. Environment

Disability access
Suitability (for service)
Hygiene
Food/eating/drinking
Décor / maintenance
Sanitation
Amenities
Other children / service users
General public

8. Quality

Lack of involvement / participation in assessment and planning
Disagree with decisions / plans / actions
Incorrect treatment / support
Lack of / poor records
Lack of follow up
Lack of progress / outcomes

5. Respect, dignity, caring

Uncaring / Insensitive
Lack of concern
Rough treatment
Lack of privacy / dignity
Not listening

9. Safety incidents

Investigation management
Injury /harm
Medication error
Equipment failure
Missing child
Inappropriate use of restraint
Driving issues
Missing / lost property

10. GDPR/Confidentiality

Information breach
Confidentiality
Problems in consent
Inappropriate use of mobile phones
Photos/images

Late invoicing
Incorrect invoicing
Expenses

12. Fundraising

11. Invoicing / expenses

Appendix 2: Complaints Contact Details

Management Level	To be referred to	Contact Details
Complaints about a Service Manager	Head of Service	See organisation structure charts for regions on Kids intranet
Complaints about a Head of Service	Director of Service Transformation Director of Fundraising Director of Finance/IT Director of HR	See organisation structure charts for regions Kids intranet
Complaints about the CEO or Executive Leadership Team	Chair of Kids Board of Trustees	See organisation structure charts for Kids leadership Teams on Kids intranet
Complaints about the Board or Trustees	Charity Commission	www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity

Appendix 3: Guidance on Handling Social Media Complaints

Social media is a growing way of receiving complaints. People often turn to social media because they feel they are not being seen or heard through other channels. It's a way to get your attention. The following steps will help you respond to and manage complaints made on social media.

1. **Be Aware.** Set up alerts for Kids / your service across the web using free tools such as Google Alerts or other tools (as advised by Kids IT department). This will help you keep on top of negative comments and prevent issues from escalating.
2. **Respond quickly.** Don't let someone complain on social media without addressing it. Try and acknowledge the comment within 2-3 hours. Thank them for contacting you and be understanding of their frustration.
3. **Take the conversations off-line.** Offer to connect with the person off-line so you can talk to them one on one to resolve the problem. This prevents the situation from escalating and others joining in. You can then progress the complaint through the standard complaints handling procedure. Do not discuss a complaint in an open public forum even if that is where the complainant has initiated their complaint.
4. **Stay calm.** Don't expect unhappy people on social media to be polite. However, don't take it personally and lose your cool. No matter how rude, being empathetic to their situation always helps. It's the service / organisation they're angry with, not you. By staying professional and keeping the brand voice you avoid feeding the fire and your followers will respect and appreciate you for it.
5. **Say sorry.** Apologise and propose working to a solution (off-line) instead of giving an excuse.
6. **Correct misinformation.** Sometimes people make it look much worse than what it really is. While interacting in a public space, it's important to tone it down and share the reality of the situation if there is any misinformation.

Appendix 4: Kids Complaints Handling Prompt Sheet

The following template can be downloaded from the Complaints Handling page on Viva Engage.

Kids Complaints Handling Prompt Sheet

Thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention. Please allow me to take details of these so I can refer the matter to the correct department / team. Thank you.

Complaint Reference Number (UCn or Number) _____ (enter once received)

1. Date complaint received / **escalated** ---- / ---- / ---- (date/month/year)

2. First of all I need to take some details about you. Is that OK?

First Name:	
Surname/family name:	
Email:	
Preferred contact number:	
Are you making this complaint	<input type="checkbox"/> For myself or <input type="checkbox"/> On behalf of someone else
What is your relationship to Kids? Are you a	<input type="checkbox"/> Child/YP in receipt of a Kids service <input type="checkbox"/> Parent or carer of a child or young person being supported by Kids <input type="checkbox"/> Parent or carer directed supported by Kids <input type="checkbox"/> A third party complaining on behalf of someone using a Kids service <input type="checkbox"/> Member of the public <input type="checkbox"/> A professional working with or involved with a family or child / young person <input type="checkbox"/> Other (give details)
If third party ** if complaint is being escalated it is important to confirm consent remains in place for third party to act on behalf of service user.	What is the name of the person you are complaining on behalf? _____ What is your relationship to the service user? _____ <i>I need to advise you that we will need to see written consent from the person you are complaining on behalf stating they are happy for you to represent them. Can you obtain this from them? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</i> <i>If NO, can you explain what difficulties there are in obtaining this?</i> <i>Advise this will be explored by the manager looking into the complaint.</i>

3. What is the nature of your concern / complaint?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What happened?
--

- Who was involved?
- When did the event take place or you became aware of it?*

**It is important to obtain specific dates where possible. If the event the person is complaining about took place over six months ago, try to establish the reason for the delay in reporting it.*

**** Not required if complaint has been escalated from – go to Q5**

4. Is there any action you would like us to take as a result of making this complaint?

If none, please record.

5. Have you tried to resolve this complaint in any way?

If YES, what have you done? What has Kids done? What issues do you consider to be unresolved? What additional / alternative action would you like us to take?

6. Do you wish to submit any supporting documents for consideration with your complaint?

If Yes, what documents would you like to submit?

7. Do you or the person you are complaining on behalf need any assistance or adjustments to enable you to communicate with us about this complaint?

If yes, what assistance or adjustments are needed?

Closing Discussion for Stage 1 / 2 Complaint

*adapt script if following up on an unresolved complaint

Again, sorry you are not happy with your experience of Kids and thank you for bringing it to our attention.

I will ensure the issues you have raised are passed to the relevant manager who will look into the points you have made.

They will be in touch with you in the next 3 to 5 working days to confirm and check details I have taken are correct and discuss the issues further.

The manager will work with you to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible. They will let you know when you can expect a full response. This can be 14 to 28 working days depending on the nature of your complaint.

You can obtain a copy of our complaints handling procedure from the Kids website.

If you do not hear back in the next 5 working days – please email complaints@KIDS.org.uk.

Is there anything else I can help you with today?

Goodbye

Complaints Handling Check List

Task	Response	Notes
Has third party consent been obtained?	Yes/ No/ NA	
Date acknowledgement email / letter sent		
Date Stage 2 complaint investigation meeting held		
Date Decision email / letter sent		
Complainant satisfied with outcome	Yes / No	
Date complaint closed? (or NA)		
Date complaint escalated to Stage 2 investigation? (or NA)		
Date complaint escalated to stage 3? (or NA)		
Date Stage 3 Appeal completed		
Date Stage 3 Appeals final decision letter sent to complainant		

Appendix 5: Template Letters

The following template letters can be downloaded from the Complaints Handling page on Viva Engage.

Template Letter 1 Acknowledgement email for Stage 1 – Front Line Resolution complaint

Dear [insert name of person],

This is to inform you that KIDS has received your complaint dated [insert date].

As I understand it, you are not happy with [insert issue].

I am looking into the points you have made as a matter of urgency and shall be in touch with you with a full response [insert anticipated response time – not longer than 14 working days].

A copy of Kids Complaints Handling Procedure can be viewed or downloaded from Kids website www.kids.org.uk

Please contact complaints@kids.org.uk if you do not hear from us within 14 working days of this email.

Thank you for your concern in this matter.

[insert name of manager / email signature]

Template Letter 2 Complaints Outcome – Stage 1 Front Line Resolution

Dear [insert name]

So sorry to hear you were unhappy with [insert issue]. As we discussed on the telephone, I've arranged for [insert action to be taken] and I hope that resolves things for you.

Please contact me by (date* 10 working days) if there are any matters you feel remain unresolved. If I do not hear from you by this date, I will consider the matter closed.

Yours sincerely

[insert name of manager/ email signature]

Template Letter 3 Acknowledgement letter – Stage 2 Complaint Investigation

Name of manager
Kids Address
Complaint Reference Number
Manager contact details; email and phone [insert]

Date

Dear [insert name]

Heading, e.g. complaint about....

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention in [your email/letter/our conversation] of [insert date].

I am sorry you are not happy with the service provided by [insert name of service / department]

As I understand it you are concerned that:

1.
2.
3.

Please contact me straight away if I have misunderstood your concerns.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss the issues you have raised and our investigation procedures, if that would be helpful. [Suggest a date and/or provide contact details]

I am looking into the points you have made as a matter of urgency and shall be in touch with you with a full response [insert anticipated response time – not longer than 28 working days].

Please do contact me again in the meantime if I can be of further assistance. My email and phone number are given above.

Yours sincerely,

Name
Job title

Template Letter 4 Decision Letter - Stage Two Complaints Investigation

Name of manager
Kids Address
Complaint Reference Number
Manager contact details; email and phone [insert]

Date

Dear [insert name]

Heading, e.g. complaint about....

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention in [your email/letter/our conversation] of [insert date].

- Statement of complaint (a short summary agreed with the complainant at the start of the process)
- The steps taken to investigate it (by you and by others if appropriate)
- What you have taken into account for example: i) things the complainant has said, ii) information you have obtained - what and from whom (take care with confidentiality), iii) relevant authority policy/guidance, iv) relevant law or standards
- Your decision and the reasons for it (state whether the complaint is fully, partially or not upheld).
- What will happen next: if action is to be taken, how, when and by whom. Don't be shy about offering a sincere apology if that is justified

I hope this matter is now resolved to your satisfaction. Please see over leaf for details of how you can escalate your complaint should you be unhappy with the process or decision Kids has reached.

If we do not hear from you in the next 10 working days (Insert date) we will assume you are satisfied with the outcome of your complaint and that the matter is closed.

Yours sincerely,

Name
Job title

Escalating your complaint

Once your complaint has been fully dealt with by Kids, if you are not satisfied with the outcome you can appeal against the decision and ask for it to be reviewed by the Executive Team/Chief Executive.

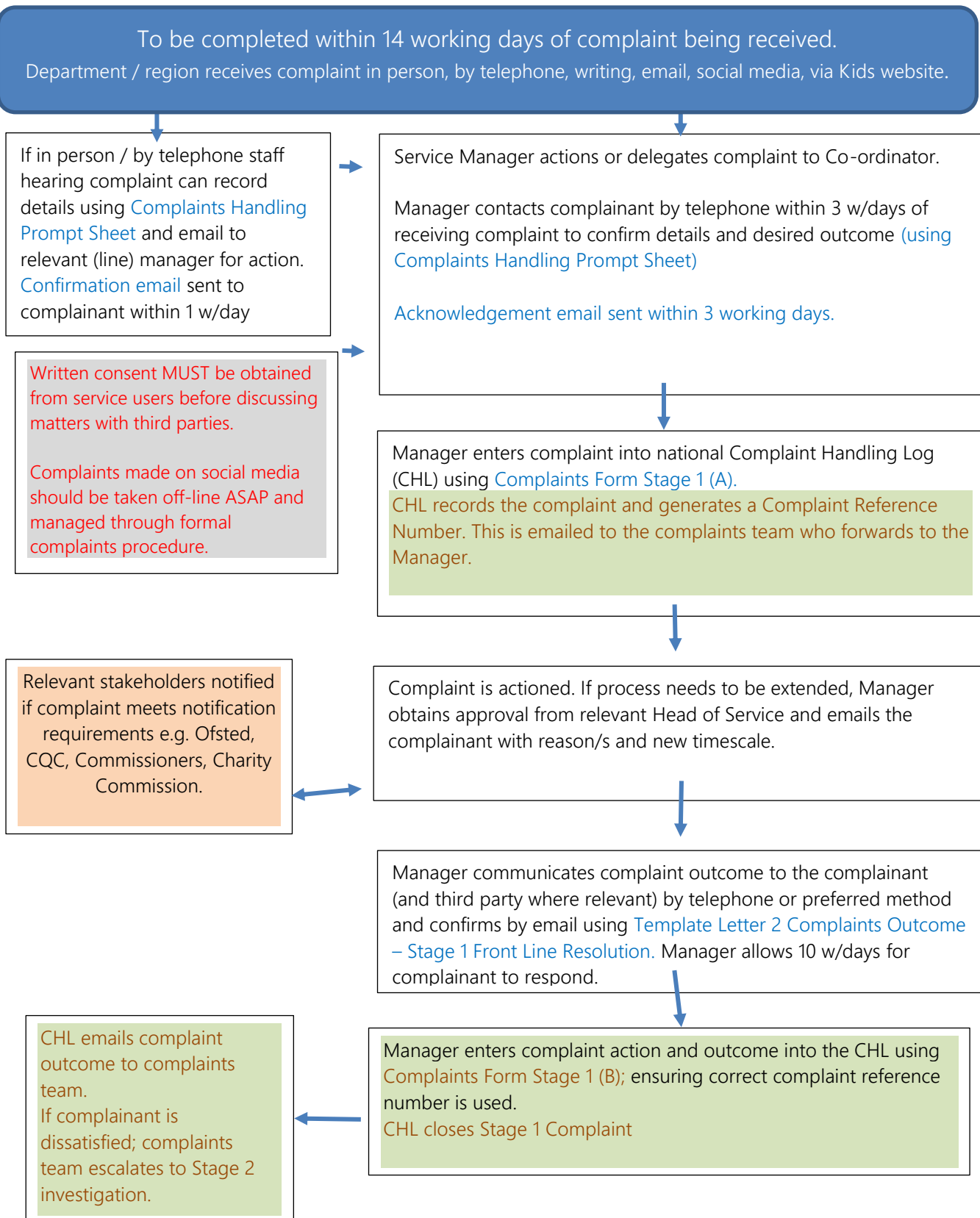
You can also refer your complaint to the following:

Local Authority Commissioner

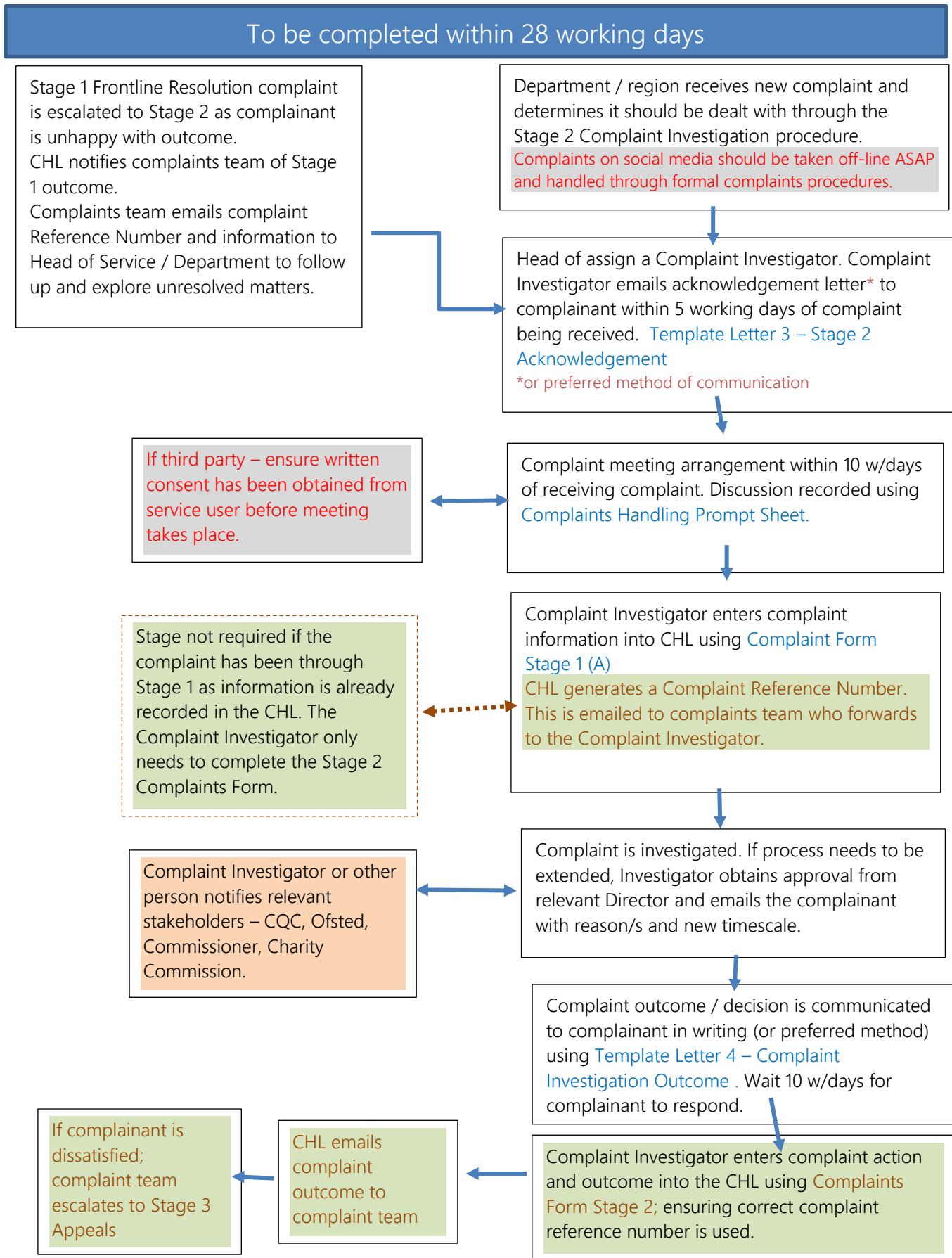
Add relevant contact details

***To add other relevant external organisations from appendix 9 of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedures*

Appendix 6: Process Flow for handing Stage 1 Front Line Resolution Complaints



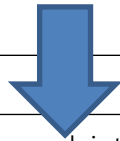
Appendix 7: Process Flow for handing Stage 2 Complaint Investigation



Appendix 8: Stage 3 Complaints Appeals Process Flow

To be completed within 10 working days.

CHL sends email alert to complaints team of Stage 2 complaint appeal.
Complaints team downloads information from CHL and forwards to CEO/Director of for review.
Complaints team forward Stage 3 Complaints Appeal Report Template



CEO/Director of review complaint handling process and outcome and make decision.
If required CEO/Director of will contact person making complaint and colleague involved in complaints handling process.
CEO / Director of notify Board of Trustees of Appeal using **Trustee Notification Form**



CEO/ Director of send Appeals Letter* to complainant with final decision and action.
Letter advises complainant about who else they can take their complaint to.
**or preferred method of communication*



CEO/Director of enters appeal into the national Complaints Handling Log using Complaints Form Stage 3 and correct reference number.
Complaints Handling Log closes Appeal.

Appendix 9: Complaints Escalation – External Organisations

- **Local Authority or organisation funding service.**
- **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)** for services commissioned or funded by a public body such as a Local Authority or National Health Service.

The LGSCO provides a free, independent service. The LGSCO Intake Team can be contacted for information and advice, or to register your complaint:

T: 0300 061 0614

W: www.lgo.org.uk/adult-social-care/ (there are links to an enquiry form and a complaint form on this page)

Write to: The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH

The LGSCO will not usually investigate a complaint until the provider has had an opportunity to respond and resolve matters.

- **Care Quality Commission (CQC) General Enquiries** if you or your children are receiving support within the home for health and personal care needs (domiciliary care).

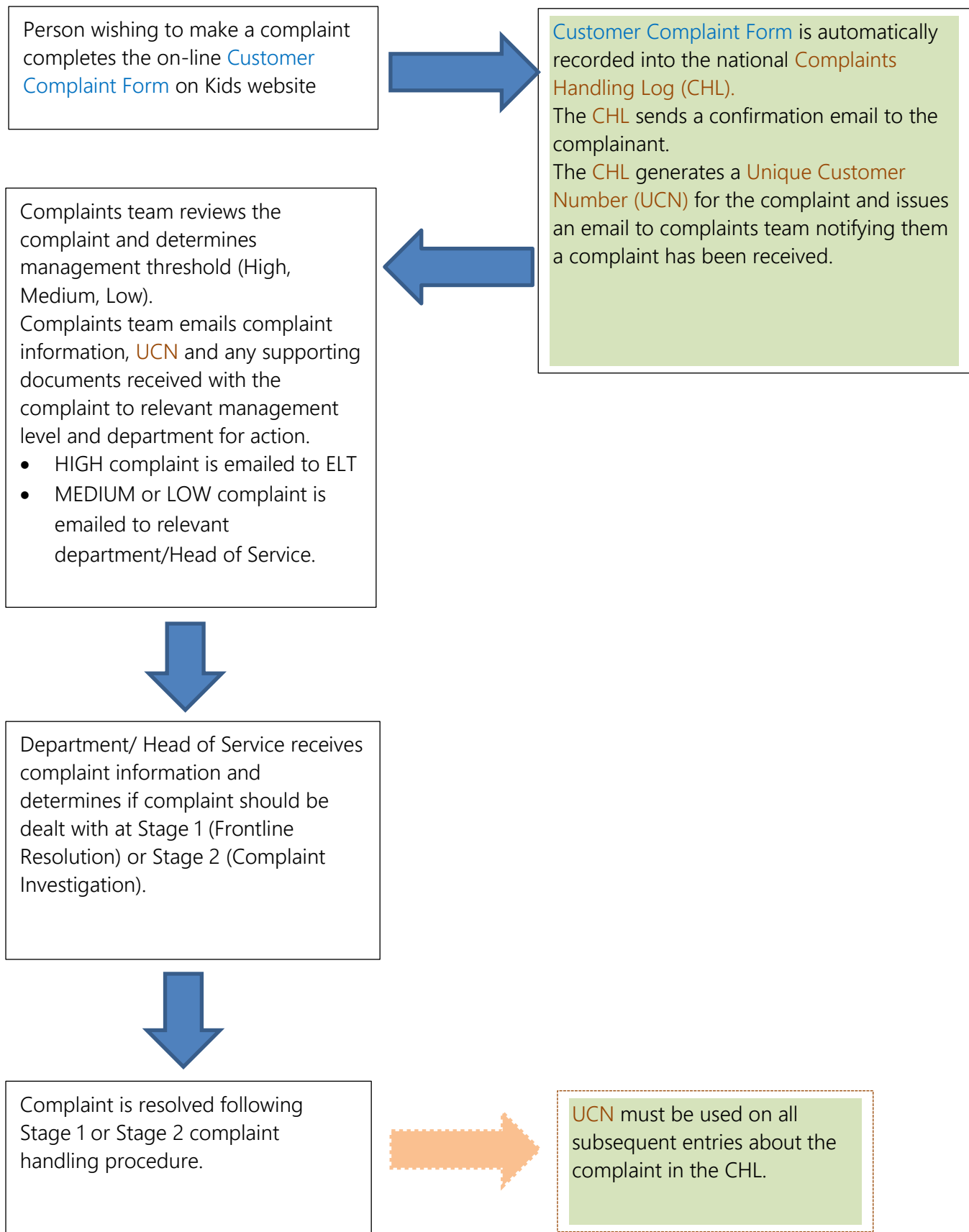
Telephone: 03000 616161

Fax: 03000 616171

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us>

- **Ofsted General Enquiries** If your children are being supported by Kids early years, play and leisure, overnight residential services including holiday schemes. Telephone: **0844 248 1747**.
- **Charity Commission** – for any other types of complaint you have, including fundraising, that are not covered by any of the above organisations. www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity
- **Civil Mediation Council (CMC)** – The civil mediation council website contains guidance if you wish to proceed in making a complaint and are in a position to do so. The CMC advise people to read the complaints guidance before proceeding with a complaint. [Raising Concerns About a CMC Member – Civil Mediation](#)

Appendix 10: Process for Handling complaints received via Kids website



Appendix 11: Stage 3 Complaints Appeal Report Template

Kids Complaints Appeals Procedure: Report Template

1. Details of Appeals process

Name of person conducting appeal process	
Role / Title	
Date Appeal started	
Date of Appeal meeting with complainant(if applicable)	
Date Appeal closed and outcome decision communicated to complainant	

2. Appeal procedure

What is the complainant appealing about the complaint? What resolution are they expecting? (Use Review questions in table below as a guide)

3. Appeals Review Outcome

Review questions	Yes, Partially, No	Findings
There is evidence that the investigator failed to follow Kids complaint procedure in a significant way that would have changed the outcome of the investigation and/or the resolutions proposed.		
There is evidence that the investigator failed to consider or did not have access to evidence that would have changed the outcome of the investigation and/or the resolutions proposed.		
The conclusions of the investigator's report and/or resolution proposed are manifestly unreasonable.		

4. Appeal Outcome Decision

[Say whether you uphold, partially uphold, or reject the original complaint outcome decision; if there are several aspects to the appeal, indicate your decision for each aspect but reach an overall decision]

5. Appeal resolution

[If the appeal is upheld or partially upheld, set out the proposed resolution. If the complainant asked for a specific resolution and you have rejected this, please say so and explain why you did not think it was appropriate]

6. Next Steps

If the complaint remains unhappy after the appeal process advise them of their right to contact relevant external bodies regarding the matter. These will be included in the outcome letter.

Appendix 12: Trustee Notification Form

Kids Trustee Notification: Complaints (High Risk and Appeals) Report Template

1. Details of complaint

Reference ID(s)	
Type of complaint - High risk - Appeal	
Summary of complaint / appeal (as set out in acknowledgement letter)	

2. Details of Serious Case Investigation / Appeals process

Name of person conducting investigation or appeal process	
Role / Title	
Date Investigation / Appeal started	
Date Investigation / Appeal closed and outcome decision communicated to complainant	
Outcome of Investigation / appeal (Upheld – Fully, Partially, Not)	
Details of proposed resolution	
Investigation / Appeal closed to the satisfaction of complainant (Yes, No, Unsure)	