

## FIRST STEPS (BATH)

### COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

First Steps (Bath) aims to provide the highest quality service for all children and families. We welcome an opportunity to respond to compliments and concerns. We aim to work in partnership with parents/carers and the community generally and we are open to suggestions on how to improve our service at any time.

There are various means by which we seek service users' views of First Steps surveys, and as part of individual child reviews and individual conversations with parents. We welcome informal feedback at any time, and we listen to comments through all those means, both those that are complimentary and supportive of the service provided, as well as those that are asking for changes to the way that services are delivered. We carefully observe children, to understand their likes and dislikes and listen to their verbal and non-verbal communication.

Specific compliments can be lodged more formally about aspects of our services, by writing to the Service Centre Manager or the Chief Executive.

If the service we provide is unsatisfactory, we have a three-stage complaints procedure, but wherever possible we want to resolve complaints at an early stage. Suggestions or complaints can be made to us in writing, by e-mail, by telephone or in person.

If a member of staff has acted in a way that has put a child at risk, or which might amount to abuse, a report is made immediately and the process within the safeguarding policy will be followed. Please refer to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy & Procedure documentation.

#### **Stage 1**

To raise a complaint about the service received from First Steps, through contact with a senior member of staff who will record the nature of the complaint in the complaints record. See appendix a. [2b appendix a compliments complaints and concern form.docx](#). This record is available to all parents/carers on request.

The service manager will investigate the complaint, explain what they have found and, if appropriate, propose a course of action to resolve the situation. She/he will confirm this in writing within 28 days. See appendix b. Internal Investigation Report [2b Appendix b Investigation Report.docx](#)

#### **Stage 2**

If the service manager has not been able to help, or the concern with the service remains unresolved, contact the Chief Executive of First Steps (Bath) to discuss whether any other ways can be found to resolve the complaint. The Chief Executive will investigate the complaint and, if appropriate, will propose a course of action to resolve the situation. She/he will confirm this in writing within 28 days.

#### **Stage 3**

If the complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily, it may be raised further by writing to the Chair of Trustees explaining why you are not satisfied with the action taken so far. The Chair will arrange to meet to discuss your complaint, a friend or partner can provide support at the meeting. Following the meeting, the Trustees' decision on any action to be taken will be final and will be confirmed in writing.

#### **Persistent and Vexatious Complaints**

At First Steps we are committed to addressing all complaints in a fair, consistent, and timely manner. However, we recognise that a small number of individuals may pursue their complaints

in a way that is unreasonable or vexatious, which can impede the effective handling of their complaint or of others.

We define persistent and vexatious complaints as those that, due to their frequency or nature, hinder our ability to consider the complaint effectively. This policy aims to ensure that our staff and resources are protected from such behaviour while still providing a fair process for all complaints.

Who is a Persistent complainant?

A persistent complainant is someone who repeatedly raises the same issue or complaint in a manner that is unreasonable. This can include:

- Refusing to accept the outcome of a complaint investigation and repeatedly arguing the point without presenting new evidence.
- Making excessive demands on staff time and resources through frequent, lengthy or complex communications.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Submitting multiple complaints about different issues at the same time, which are often trivial or unrelated.
- Using aggressive or abusive language towards staff.

Our goal is to manage these situations with empathy and professionalism, ensuring that all complaints are handled appropriately while maintaining a respectful and safe environment for our staff and other service users.

In these instances, an informal meeting will be arranged with the CE to understand if there has been a loss of trust and how to move forward in a calm and sensible way.

### **The role of Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education)**

- In some circumstances it may be necessary to involve Ofsted who, as the registering body for childcare, have a duty to ensure laid down requirements are adhered to.
- Ofsted must be involved if a child is at risk or where there appears to be a possible breach of registration requirements.
- In either of the above cases both parents/carers and the Centre must be informed by Ofsted, and a full investigation of the complaint will be followed by appropriate action.
- Ofsted can be contacted at: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD .  
Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) Tel: 0300 123 1231.

## **FUNDRAISING COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

First Steps (Bath) aims to provide the highest quality service for everyone who donates to and fundraises for the charity. We are keen to hear from anyone who feels that we have fallen short of these standards.

### **How to make a complaint**

You can provide your feedback by contacting us on the details below:

Telephone: 01225 444791

Email: [info@firststepsbath.org.uk](mailto:info@firststepsbath.org.uk)

Address: First Steps (Bath), Woodhouse Road, Twerton, Bath BA2 1SY

We will acknowledge and provide an initial response to your feedback within 10 days of receiving it. Whilst we expect to be able to resolve most complaints within that time, if we need to conduct

a more in-depth investigation, we aim to provide you with a full response within 28 days. If we are unable to meet that deadline due to exceptional circumstances, we will advise you.

If you are not happy with the response you receive, you can escalate your concerns to the CE, who will consider the complaint in more detail.

## **Record of complaints**

First Steps will keep a record of all Fundraising complaints for 24 months, as mandated by the Fundraising Regulator. Records of all other complaints will be kept for ten years. This information will not be used for any other purpose. In accordance with data protection law, you may request to view the information being held regarding your complaint and may request that be put beyond use (although if you do this before the complaint investigation has been resolved, this may render the original complaint void).

This record will be available to the Fundraising Regulator, upon request, along with a record of all communication.

## **The Fundraising Regulator**

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation into a fundraising complaint, you may refer your complaint to the Fundraising Regulator who will independently investigate your complaint. They advise that you should do so within two months of receipt of the complaint investigation outcome. You can contact the Fundraising Regulator on their website:

[www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/make-a-complaint/complaints](http://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/make-a-complaint/complaints)

If a complaint is made or referred to the Fundraising Regulator regarding First Steps (Bath), we will comply fully with the Fundraising Regulator and any proposed remedy.

## **Links to other policies:**

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Bullying & Harassment at Work
- Whistleblowing
- Confidentiality Policy

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2007

Policy reviewed and updated by SMT January 2017

Reviewed by Trustees February 2018

Reviewed by SMT January 2019

Reviewed by SMT January 2020

Reviewed by SMT January 2021

Reviewed by SMT November 2021

Reviewed by SMT January 2023

Reviewed by SMT April 2024

Reviewed by SMT January 2025

**FIRST STEPS (BATH)****Compliments, Complaints and Concern Record.****Service:****Date of complaint:****Source of complaint** (please circle):

Parent (in writing, including email)

Parent (in person)

Parent (phone call)

Staff member

Anonymous

Ofsted (include complaint number if known)

**Other (please state)****Details (compliment, complaint, concern)****Action taken. (details of investigations)****Outcomes:****Additional Information to prevent future issues:****Details of feedback and date** given (to be within 28 days of receiving if formal complaint):**Signature of staff member:****Date:****Manager signature:****Date:**

For staff use only:

Copy to complaint log (no names)

↑ Please tick

Copy to complaint log [All sites anonymous Complaint and concerns log.xlsx](#)

Copy to office file (to include names)

↑ Please tick

**First Steps (Bath)****CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATION REPORT**

Author:	<i>Name, Job title</i>
Date investigations commenced:	
Date investigations concluded:	
Name/Designation of employee (or employees) subject to investigation:	<i>Name, Job title</i>
Allegation/Issue:	
Name of complainant:	
HR/Support Link:	

**Background:**

- *Identify how the situation came to light (based on the factual information provided by the complainant); what actions have already been taken prior to the investigation commencing; what communications have taken place.*

**Remit of Investigation:**

- *Define remit of investigation, i.e. what allegations/concerns were identified as in need of investigation (provide concise bullet points list of all allegations, that will be expanded upon in 'Findings' section).*
- *State policy under which the investigation was carried out (e.g. Disciplinary Policy).*

**Investigation Process:**

*Explain how the investigation progressed, including reasons for decisions which were made and the direction the investigation went including.*

- *A brief description of the method(s) used to gather information.*
- *Provide details of interviewees, including name, post, reason, date of interview. It may be appropriate to attach the record of interview.*
- *If the investigator has not interviewed all potential individuals the decision should be recorded in this section (including reasons, e.g., did not directly witness event)*
- *A chronology of events, (detailing any delays in the investigation).*
- *What documents/evidence were reviewed.*

**Findings:**

*Provide a summary of the findings and observations:*

*Present the findings separately for each point/allegation of concern in turn, by confirming the facts established within the investigation, identifying the sequence of events, cross-referencing any documentation and highlighting any mitigating factors, e.g. lack of procedural guidance, management action or expected documentation, and any other actions/behaviours which may have compounded or aggravated the situation.*

*Avoid using vast extracts from statements – only quote directly from the statements where it is necessary. It is the investigators responsibility to analyse all the statements and draw out all corroborative evidence. If the evidence is inconclusive or there is no evidence to substantiate an allegation – say so. It is also the investigators responsibility to explain how significant the evidence is – this should come across in the report. Note any specific actions that demonstrate a breach of policy or standards of conduct/performance that did not meet those normally expected. Refer back to the agreed remit of investigation, ensuring you cover all the points.*

### **Conclusion:**

*NOTE: When reviewing the evidence, investigators need to aim to demonstrate reasonable belief as to what happened, based on their assessment of the evidence available. The standard of proof for internal investigations and any subsequent disciplinary hearing or grievance meeting is based on the ‘balance of probabilities’, i.e. that on the basis of the evidence it was more probable that not that the alleged incident/misconduct was committed. Investigators are not required to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt, unlike criminal investigations, but do need to act reasonable on behalf of the employer.*

- *For each allegation/concern/issue provide an overall fact-based opinion on a) whether there is any evidence to support the allegations, and b) the strength of the evidence.*
- *Support the conclusions with evidence. The conclusions should be clear and concise.*
- *Identify the strengths and weaknesses in the evidence.*
- *Draw out any key facts which demonstrate particular breaches of policy, e.g. Code of Conduct,*
- *If there are any special or mitigating factors ensure that they are clear within the conclusions, and it is important to explain their significance.*
- *Each allegation should have a clear outcome in line with the LADO procedures, stating whether it is found to be*
  - *Substantiated: there is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation.*
  - *False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.*
  - *Malicious: there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.*
  - *Unfounded: there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of all the circumstances.*

- Unsubstantiated: this is not the same as a false allegation. It means that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation; the term therefore does not imply guilt or innocence.