

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

We value complaints and use this information to help us improve our services.

Forces Children Scotland welcomes all forms of feedback and comments about the way that we work, including complaints. We are committed to using them to improve how we work, to address complaints in a fair, person-centred and cooperative way and to respect the rights of everyone involved.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This document describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- failure or refusal to provide a service
- inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual
- failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- conduct, treatment by or attitude of a volunteer, a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves); or
- disagreement with a decision.

Your complaint may involve more than one Forces Children Scotland service or be about someone working on our behalf.

If you are complaining on behalf of someone else, we may need their consent to proceed.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Forces Children Scotland:

- Listens and responds appropriately and effectively to people who raise an issue with us
- Has a fair and consistent approach to feedback and complaints regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, belief, or sexual orientation of the complainant
- Offers appropriate solutions or explanations
- Provides opportunities to escalate complaints
- Respects confidentiality
- Maintains a culture that treats complaints as an opportunity for learning and improvement

- Commits not to allow making a complaint to harm or prejudice the service we provide to the complainant

If you have positive comments about our work or how we have helped you, please email admin@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk so we can track that feedback, share with team members and act on it where necessary.

PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS

If you have a complaint, we would like to know so that we can put things right. We would encourage you to raise the matter with any member of staff as soon as possible.

You can make your complaint to any member of staff. We seek to resolve any complaints raised as early as possible and our principles include resolving matters impartially and fairly.

You can reach us through any of the following channels:

By post: Forces Children Scotland, c/o The Melting Pot, 15 Calton Road, Edinburgh, EH8 8DL

By email: admin@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk

By phone: 0131 322 7350

By contacting a Forces Children Scotland worker you know verbally, by phone, by email or in writing, including by text or WhatsApp

STAGE 1: EARLY RESOLUTION

We will work with you to try and find a solution, agree an appropriate way forward and resolve issues impartially, fairly, and as quickly as possible.

We will aim to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible, and ideally within 5 working days. If the nature of the complaint means more time is needed, then we will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and aim to resolve it within 20 working days.

We will write an action plan for each complaint. This action plan will cover what steps we are taking to resolve your situation and to improve our services and practices. Relevant actions will be shared with you and the complaint and action plan will be stored in line with our privacy policy.

If either you or we feel your complaint is complex, we are unable to resolve it within 20 working days and/or that it merits an in-depth investigation, or if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1, we will deal with your complaint at Stage 2.

STEP 2: IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATION

If your complaint cannot be resolved in Stage 1, we will handle it at stage 2.

We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days, investigate the issue and explore possible solutions. We will discuss the complaint with the individual raising the issue and, if the complaint relates to individual(s) within the organisation, with the person(s) concerned. Where possible, the process will be kept confidential and will only involve the people who are involved in the complaint or are part of the investigation process.

You can ask to be supported by an appropriate representative at any time and for as long as you need. An appropriate representative could be a teacher, an advocacy worker, or your parent for example.

We will send you a response with our decision within 20 working days. If the matter takes longer than 20 working days, then we will write to you every two weeks with updates, until it is resolved or escalated.

STAGE 3: ESCALATION/APPEAL

If, after receiving our decision, you remain unhappy with our decision or the way we handled your complaint, you can ask, within 10 working days of the decision being issued, that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) consider it.

The CEO will acknowledge the appeal within 10 working days, review the matter, and respond within 20 working days. If the matter takes longer than 20 working days, then we will write to you with an update at the end of that period. The CEO will continue to provide you with updates until it is resolved.

If you are still unsatisfied with Forces Children's Scotland's response, there will an opportunity to speak with a member of the Board of Trustees.

COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO) OR MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Should your complaint relate to the CEO or a Trustee, it will be dealt with under Stage 2. Please address your complaint to the Forces Children Scotland Board of Trustees and email it to admin@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 10 working days. A Trustee will investigate the complaint and report to a panel of at least two other Trustees who will share a response with the decision with you within 20 working days. If there is a reason for needing more time, we will share this with you.

If, after receiving the decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with the decision or the way that your complaint has been handled, you can ask, within 10 working days of the decision being issued, that the Chair of the Board of Trustees consider it. The Chair will review the matter and respond within 30 working days. If there is a reason for needing more time, we will share this with you.

The Chair's decision on matters relating to the CEO or Trustees is final.

NOTES

Investigations can be halted at any time if it emerges that any child or vulnerable person is at risk, or if legal action is underway, pending or intended. The investigation cannot restart under this policy until such issues have been resolved.

We do understand that the circumstances around a complaint can sometimes lead to heightened emotions, and we will always do our best to resolve any issues as quickly and as effectively as we can. If a complaint is accompanied by aggression or harassment, Forces Children Scotland reserves the right to refuse to meet with you during the process or to engage with you in any form beyond written contact within the parameters of this complaints process.

EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS

If you are dissatisfied with Forces Children Scotland's complaints process, you can contact the Scottish Charity Regulator, who will be able to advise on whether they may be able to guide you on the matter. <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/raise-a-concern/>