



The Lodge

Complaints Policy

Setting: The Lodge

Organisation: PJ Creative Learning Ltd

Policy Owner: PJ Creative Learning Ltd

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Introduction

At The Lodge, we are committed to creating a safe, respectful, inclusive and supportive environment for every learner. We recognise that concerns or complaints may arise, and we see these as an important opportunity to listen, reflect and improve.

We want learners, parents, carers, professionals and members of the public to feel confident that any concern will be taken seriously, responded to with care and handled in a fair and transparent way.

This policy explains how concerns and complaints about The Lodge can be raised and how they will be managed. It also explains how safeguarding concerns and matters that are the responsibility of a school, local authority or another organisation will be handled.

Who Can Raise a Concern or Complaint

A concern or complaint may be raised by a learner, parent or carer, referring school, professional, visitor or member of the public. A person does not have to use a particular form or legal language. They may ask another person to support them.

The Lodge will make reasonable adjustments to the complaints process where these are needed. This may include accepting a complaint verbally, helping a person put their concern in writing, allowing a supporter to attend a meeting or using an accessible method of communication.

No learner will be treated less favourably because they or someone acting for them has raised a concern or complaint in good faith.

Raising a Concern

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through open and honest communication. Where possible, concerns should be raised with the Lodge Lead so that they can be understood and addressed at an early stage.

Concerns may be shared in person, by phone or in writing using the contact details provided by The Lodge. We aim to respond promptly and work collaboratively with those involved to find a resolution. Our approach is to listen carefully, understand the concern fully and respond in a calm and constructive manner.

We recognise that raising a concern can sometimes feel difficult. Support will be offered, and no concern will be dismissed or overlooked.

Formal Complaints

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, or where the person wishes to use the formal process immediately, it may be raised as a formal complaint. The complaint should explain what happened, what the concern is and what outcome is being sought. The Lodge will provide help to record the complaint where needed.

The complaint will be acknowledged within two working days. It will be reviewed carefully, taking account of all relevant information. This may involve speaking to those involved, considering records and reflecting on practice. A person whose conduct is the subject of a complaint will not be asked to make the final decision about that complaint.

A written response will normally be provided within ten working days. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for the decision and any action that can appropriately be shared. Where additional time is needed, the complainant will be told why and given a revised response date.

Where a complaint is upheld, appropriate steps will be taken to address the issue and strengthen practice. Possible outcomes may include an explanation, an apology, corrective action, a change to arrangements, further training or a review of a policy or risk assessment.

Review of a Formal Complaint

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may ask for the response to be reviewed. The request should normally be made within ten working days of receiving the formal response and should explain why a review is requested.

The Policy Owner will arrange for the complaint and response to be considered by a person who was not responsible for the original decision. This may be another suitably experienced adult within PJ Creative Learning Ltd or, where appropriate, an independent person agreed with the complainant or commissioning organisation.

The reviewer will consider whether the complaint was handled fairly, whether the relevant information was considered and whether the outcome was reasonable. The review outcome will normally be provided within ten working days. If more time is needed, the complainant will be given a reason and a revised date.

If a complaint concerns the Lodge Lead, or the Lodge Lead cannot act impartially, the complaint should be marked confidential for the Policy Owner. An appropriate independent reviewer will be arranged. The complainant may also contact the referring school or commissioning organisation directly.

Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding is always prioritised over the standard complaints process. Any concern about the safety or wellbeing of a child will be treated as a safeguarding matter and responded to without delay. It is not necessary to have proof before sharing a concern.

Safeguarding concerns received by The Lodge are passed immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Appropriate action may include contacting the referring school, children's social care, the police or the Local Authority Designated Officer. A person may also contact these services directly if they prefer.

The Lodge does not investigate allegations against adults independently where these should be managed under safeguarding procedures. Such concerns are referred to the appropriate external authority without delay. The complaints process will not be used to delay a safeguarding referral or an emergency response.

Information will be shared lawfully and proportionately where this is necessary to protect a child. Data protection law does not prevent appropriate safeguarding information sharing.

Matters Managed Through Another Procedure

Some matters are not decided by The Lodge. Concerns about a learner's school place, statutory education plan, school attendance decisions, exclusions or the wider commissioned education package should be raised with the responsible school or local authority. The Lodge will cooperate and provide relevant information where it is lawful and appropriate to do so.

Staff grievances, disciplinary matters, whistleblowing disclosures, data protection rights and safeguarding allegations may need to be managed under a separate policy or statutory process. The person raising the matter will be told which route applies wherever this can properly be explained.

External Escalation

The Lodge provides part time commissioned support and is not a school. The referring school or local authority retains responsibility for the learner's overall education and oversight of the placement. A person who remains dissatisfied may use the complaints procedure of the school or local authority where the matter relates to commissioning, placement oversight or a decision for which that organisation is responsible.

Safeguarding concerns may be reported directly to children's social care or the police. Concerns about an adult who works or volunteers with children may be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer. Professionals who believe that safeguarding concerns are not being handled properly may also seek advice through the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line.

Confidentiality

All concerns and complaints are handled with sensitivity and respect. Information is shared only where it is necessary and lawful to do so. Complete confidentiality cannot be promised where information must be shared to protect a child, investigate a concern fairly or meet a legal obligation.

People involved in a complaint are expected to respect the privacy of others. Records and responses may be redacted where necessary to protect personal information.

Recording and Learning

All formal complaints, decisions and actions are recorded clearly and stored securely in line with the Full GDPR Policy and Privacy Notice. Informal concerns will also be recorded where this is necessary to safeguard a learner, monitor a pattern or confirm agreed action.

Following a complaint, The Lodge will consider what can be learned and whether any changes are needed. This may include updates to procedures, additional training, changes to risk management or adjustments to practice.

Monitoring and Review

The Policy Owner reviews concerns and complaints to identify patterns, repeated issues and areas for improvement. Safeguarding oversight remains with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner following a significant complaint, a change to legislation or guidance, or a material change to the way the provision operates.

Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Attendance and Engagement Policy, SEND Inclusion Policy, Full GDPR Policy and Privacy Notice.