

Complaints procedure

Sweet Futures Limited



Author:	Geoff Littlewood	
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1. Aims

Our company aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents or carers of young people using our services.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- › Be impartial and non-adversarial
- › Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- › Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- › Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- › Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- › Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- › Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- › Consider how the complaint can feed into company improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The company will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the company website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy complies with our articles of association.

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 Definitions

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The company will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”

3.2 Scope

The company intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Safeguarding matters
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the company throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media

4.2 The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint, and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the CEO which includes the facts and potential solutions

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- › What has happened
- › Who was involved
- › What the complainant feels would put things right

5.1 Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 8 days of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 8 days of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of business hours, we will consider them to have been received on the next working day.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- › Set new time limits with the complainant
- › Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the CEO or Directors)

6.1 Stage 1: informal

The company will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the CEO as appropriate, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the designated director, Claire Scott on 07411 190523.

The company will acknowledge informal complaints within 5 working days, and investigate and provide a response within 10 working days.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the designated director, if appropriate

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

6.2 Stage 2: formal

Formal complaints can be raised:

- › By letter or email
- › Over the phone
- › In person
- › By a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the company designated director as identified in Stage 1.

The designated director will call a meeting to clarify concerns, and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the company of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the company may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the company will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The designated director will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 20 working days.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the CEO within 5 working days.

How to escalate a complaint

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the CEO:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

6.3 Stage 3: Final Complaint Review

The CEO will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stages of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The CEO will review the documentation provided by all parties and make a final decision and recommendation. This decision is final and completes the complaints procedure.

7. Record keeping

The company will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and record retention schedule.

8. Learning lessons

The board of directors will review any underlying issues raised by the complaint and, where appropriate, respecting confidentiality, determine whether there are any improvements that the company can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

9. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- Privacy notices