

Policy and Procedure **Complaints and Representations**

Introduction

- 1.1 The Complaints procedure is a device through which children or young people, parents, staff, foster carer/s, applicants or social workers can raise grievances and where possible, the grievance can be resolved quickly through talking and to the satisfaction of all concerned.
- 1.2 A grievance can be a complaint or problem arising from the care the child or young person is receiving at Perpetual Fostering, and all children or young people have the right to raise a grievance.
- 1.3 Perpetual Fostering will not under any circumstances restrict the issues a child or young person can complain about.
- 1.4 Complaints that involve child protection concerns will be dealt with under the procedure relating to child protection matters. It may also be necessary to invoke other procedures, for example disciplinary procedures, dependent on the nature of the complaint.
- 1.5 A complaint may be raised by foster carer/s and applicants, parents, staff, social workers and other professional in terms of the service they are receiving from the agency.
- 1.6 It is expected that some complaints can be dealt with informally, however full recording will be logged of any such grievance.
- 1.7 Perpetual Fostering will ensure that children and young people, parents, foster carer/s, applicants or social workers, are fully aware of the steps available to them under Perpetual Fostering complaints procedures and external complaints systems, such as OFSTED.
- 1.8 Children and young people are made aware of the manner in which such grievances should be made, and that no matter what the grievance Perpetual Fostering will treat this seriously and with the correct professional manner.

- 1.9 Social workers and foster carer/s should make children and young people aware of how to complain using their placing authority complaints procedure.
- 1.10 Children and young person's welcome pack provides a wealth of advice for the child and young person of their rights and whom they complain to. The foster carer handbook also provides advice and guidance on complaints/rights.

2.0 Complaints by Children / Young People, Parent/s / applicant/s, and foster carer/s

Procedure

Stage 1: Informal meeting to sort out the complaint with the Registered Manager/ or senior member of staff. This may involve negotiation, arbitration and mediation to resolve a complaint.

- 2.1 Where a child or young person, parent or foster carer is aggrieved about any matter relating to a child or young person's care, a senior member of staff / or Registered Manager will discuss the matter initially with the child/young person and parent or foster carer as soon as possible; in exceptional circumstances within five working days.
- 2.2 It is important that the child or young person, parent or foster carer is permitted to raise as part of the grievance a series of directly related incidents having a cumulative effect
- 2.3 The child/young person, or a parent, foster carer or applicant, may if they wish outline the grievance orally or in writing.
- 2.4 The Registered Manager will acknowledge the complaint within five working days from receiving the complaint.
- 2.5 The child or young person and parent/s, foster carer or applicant may wish to seek advice from another person prior to discussing the grievance i.e. an advocate or their social worker and foster carer/s, Perpetual Fostering will help facilitate this.

- 2.6 Perpetual Fostering will ensure children and young people, parent/s and foster carer/s have access to people who are independent from our organisation. In the case of children and young people, this may be NYAS or for foster carer/s, the Fostering Network or Foster Talk.
- 2.7 In exceptional circumstances where it would not be appropriate for the child/young person, parents or foster carer/s or applicants to discuss the grievance initially with a member of staff or the Registered Manager, then the Managing Director should be informed immediately in these circumstances.
- 2.8 Should the complaint not be resolved within an informal meeting and following negotiation or arbitration, the complaint will move to stage 2.

Stage 2: A formal investigation is carried out by the Registered Manager. The Registered Manager will write a report (and send a copy to the child or young person, parent/s, foster carer/s and social services) and explain in person their findings to the child or young person, parent/s or foster carer/s. The Registered Manager will give their recommendations within twenty working days of the start of this stage two.

- 2.9 If the child/young person, parent/s, foster carer/s or applicant is not satisfied with the response from stage one, the grievance should be set down in writing and formal investigation carried out by the Registered Manager.
- 2.10 The Registered Manager will write a report (and send this to the complainant, the placing authority and Ofsted) and explain in person their findings to the child/young person, parent/s or foster carer/s.
- 2.11 The Registered Manager will notify the child/young person, parent/s or foster carer/s or applicants of their decision in writing. This notification should be within twenty working days of the date of the start of stage two. A copy should be sent to the CEO, OFSTED, and the social worker. The Registered Manager will be available to go through the report with the complainant.

2.12 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at the conclusion of stage 2, the complaint will proceed to stage 3. If the child or young person, parent/s or foster carer/s or applicant remains dissatisfied, she/he has the right, within twenty working days of stage two being completed, to appeal.

Stage 3: A complaints panel (consisting of senior management) will be convened to consider a stage three complaint. It must meet within four weeks of the start of stage 3 and the child or young person, parent/s or foster carer/s have the right to attend. The panel must make its decision within 24 hours.

2.13 The matter shall be heard by a panel (which should include at least one Director and preferably a person unconnected with fostering), as soon as practicable and normally within twenty working days of the receipt of the appeal.

2.14 The child/young person, parent/s or foster carer/s are entitled to attend the panel and he/she shall be notified of the panel's decision in writing as soon as practicable and other than in exceptional circumstances within 24 hours.

3.0 Further Stage

3.1 If the child/young person, parent/s or foster carer/s or applicants are still dissatisfied, management should encourage the child or young person, parent/s or foster carer/s or applicants to make a further complaint to external sources should they wish to, and the Registered Manager will ensure that contact details are given. The Registered Manager/director will inform Ofsted that the complaint remains unresolved.

4.0 Monitoring and Review

4.1 The operation of the policy and procedures will be monitored. Records of complaints will be collated by the Managing Director, and be reviewed annually.

4.2 A named person from Perpetual Fostering will be identified to liaise with the person who has made the complaint, whether a child or young person, a parent, foster carer or a social worker makes this.

4.3 The named person will support the complainant throughout the process and keep them informed of the progress. They will also ensure that the final outcome is given in writing and ensure that this is in a format that is understandable.

4.4 The Registered Manager will make sure that Ofsted are informed, and that any parent (if appropriate) and the child or young person's social worker are also informed of any complaint.

5.0 Complaints from External Source – i.e. Local Shop Keepers, Neighbours, Police Etc

5.1 Perpetual Fostering is committed to being a good neighbour and a responsible member of any community that our foster homes are situated in. Therefore, any complaint by an external source is to be treated in a professional manner.

5.2 The Registered Manager will inform the Managing Director at the first opportunity of any such complaint. A record will be made of the complaint and the external source will also be informed of other sources they can raise their complaint with, for example the local CSCI unit (though the company is committed to resolving these complaints to a satisfactory conclusion for any complainant).

5.3 The three stages of the process for the resolution of complaints will be adhered to in such complaints.

6.0 Complaints by a Social Worker

6.1 Any complaint by a social worker is to be treated in a professional manner and should be recorded.

6.2 The Registered Manager will inform the CEO at the first opportunity of any such complaint, and inform Ofsted. A record will be made of the complaint and the social worker will also be informed of other sources they can raise their complaint with, for example Ofsted (though the company is committed to resolving these complaints to a satisfactory conclusion for any complainant).

6.3 The three stages of the process for the resolution of complaints will be adhered to in such complaints.

Lisa Witter – Perpetual Fostering Registered Manager

Revised June 2021

