

# SHIRLEY CHILDREN'S CENTRE COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy links to the following:

- Lone Working and Home Visiting
- Equality and Diversity
- Volunteering
- Partnership with parents and the local community
- Confidentiality policy and guideline
- Publicity and marketing

Document Control

Amendment History

<b>Version/Issue Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Remarks/Reason for change</b>	<b>Review Date</b>
1	October 2014	Eyullahemaye Henry-Miller	To be ratified by the governing body	October 2015
2	October 2015	Eyullahemaye Henry-Miller	Review	October 2016
3	October 2016	Eyullahemaye Henry-Miller	Review	October 2017
4	October 2017	Yvonne Charalambous	Review	October 2018
5	October 2018	Nicky Cook & Katie Coomber	Review	October 2019

# Children's Centre Complaints Procedure

## 1. Statement of intent /policy statement

Shirley Children's Centre believes that children and parents/carers are entitled to expect courteous and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. If any aspect of the centre falls short in this standard, then it is fair and appropriate that parents/carers are able to complain, and have an established procedure for doing so.

## 2. Aim/purpose

Shirley Children's Centre:

- Welcome suggestions on how to improve the centre
- Give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the centre. It is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved quickly with an informal approach to the relevant member of staff. If this does not produce the desired result, then there is a set of procedures for dealing with concerns

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to everyone at the centre including staff, volunteers, families and visitors. 'Staff' includes both those employed by Croydon Council as well as those from other agencies e.g. Statutory and voluntary agencies who provide services for the centre, as part of the multi-agency framework delivering services to families & children. This also applies to staff from the statutory and non-statutory sector; the latter includes private, voluntary and independent groups.

## 4. Legal Context

This policy is covered by:

- Best Start Children's Centre Practice Guidance 2013
- Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 & 2018
- The Children Acts 1989 & 2006, Adoption and Children Act 2002 & 2018
- The Early Years Foundation Stage Principles 2011: **Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to 5yrs**
- Every Child Matters: change for children 2004. Outcomes: **Be healthy, Be safe**
- Equalities Act 2010
- The Duty to Promote Community Cohesion 2011
- The Disability Equality Duty 2017

## 5. What will we do?

Mandatory systems and procedures

### How to complain

#### Stage 1

- Any parent/carer who has concerns about an aspect of the centre is welcome, and invited to, explain his/her worries and anxieties with the staff member running the group or session. The parent concerned would also be invited to speak to the Children's Centre Manager

## Stage 2

- If this initial conversation does not reach a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem arises again, then the parent/carer moves to this second stage which is seen as a more formal procedure. This involves putting the concern or complaint in writing to the Children's Centre Manager.
- It would be expected that most complaints might be resolved informally at Stage 1

## Stage 3

- The Children's Centre Manager invites the parent/carer to a meeting to discuss the letter. Normally this meeting would take place in the centre itself, but if requested, and subject to any suitable risk assessment, this could take place in a neutral venue, or indeed the family's home. If required the parent/ carer may also choose to be accompanied by a friend or partner for support.
- It is important for the Children's Centre Manager to have a colleague present; this person can verify the conversation at a later stage if needed.
- A written record of the meeting is made and details of any agreed outcomes or decisions are carefully stated. This is signed by all those present as an accurate record, and this also signifies that the procedure has concluded satisfactorily for all concerned.
- At a later stage a typed version is produced and sent to the family, with a copy kept on file in the centre.

## Stage 4

- If at the Stage 3 meeting there is no resolution to the concern, then the meeting is concluded with the agreement that an independent mediator from The Synaptic Trust is invited in to help settle the complaint.
- This person should be acceptable to both parties, able to listen to both sides and then offer advice that leads to an acceptable way forward. A mediator has no legal powers but can help to define the problem, review the action so far and then objectively suggest strategies to avoid future difficulties.
- The mediator should keep records and knowledge of these discussions confidential. S/he can hold separate meetings with relevant staff from the centre and the parent/carer if this is thought to be helpful.
- The mediator will keep an agreed written record of any meetings that are held, any advice given and any agreed outcomes.

## Stage 5

- When the mediator has concluded his/her activity in the case, a final meeting between the parent/carer and the centre staff is held. The purpose of that meeting is to reach a decision on the action that needs to be taken to settle the complaint.
- The advice given by the mediator is used to inform this decision, so s/he should also attend this meeting to clarify or explain the decision-making.
- A record of this meeting, including the decision on the action to be taken is made. Everyone present at the meeting signs the record and receives a copy of it. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded.
- At a later stage a typed copy is produced and sent to the family, with a copy kept on file in the centre.

**Final decision**

If this process is not completed successfully, then intervention on behalf of the Children's Centre will come in the first instance from Forest Academy School. Again, if resolution is not reached through this, then this would go to both the Early Intervention Partnership Manager and the person with the lead responsibility for Early Years and Childcare Services. At this level, the Legal Team could also be involved if necessary to act on behalf of the Croydon Council.

**Record-keeping**

A record of complaints against the Children's Centre and/or the adults working in the centre is kept in a secure and confidential location.

Details will include the nature and circumstances of the complaint, the date and how it was managed.

**Family Support**

The centre takes every possible step to build up trusting and supporting relations with families, staff and volunteers. In the event of a parent/carer making a complaint against the centre, and subject to a satisfactory risk assessment, child/family support and/or childcare will still be made available to the family concerned.

**6. How are we going to make sure that this happens?**Implementation, methods**In conjunction with the lead provider**

This will be monitored on an annual basis with the Advisory Board.

**Information**

Reference will be made to this policy and procedures in all Children's Centre publicity leaflets and in any contract with parents.

**Involvement/Consultation**

- Regular newsletters for parents and carers in the centre.
- Home visits to discuss anything affecting the family.
- Sharing any concerns about children with a family as soon as possible, in line with the policy on information sharing.

**7. How will we check this?**Monitoring and reviewing

- It is the responsibility of the Children's Centre Manager to monitor and review the effectiveness of all policies relating to the centre.
- The Children's Centre Manager will review and update this policy in line with the policy review cycle.
- The Children's Centre Manager will update and amend this policy and its procedures in line with any emerging and relevant government legislation or Croydon Council guidance.

**8. For further information please contact:**

Nicky Cook & Katie Coomber  
Interim Universal Services Coordinator  
Shirley Children's Centre  
34 Lilac Gardens  
Shirley  
Croydon  
CR0 8NR  
Tel: 020 8777 2119

It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping staff, volunteers, families and the management committee informed/trained and up-to-date with procedures, the centre can avoid the need for complaints.

However, the Children's Centre Manager is the first point of contact should any queries arise over this policy and its related procedures.

**9. Policy endorsement**

The policy is agreed and signed by the governing body of Forest Academy School