

Child Protection Complaints Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures for receiving, managing, and resolving complaints related to child protection concerns. Its purpose is to ensure that all complaints are handled promptly, fairly, and in a manner that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, families, and visitors associated with the organisation.

Principles

- **Child Safety First:** All actions and decisions must prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- **Confidentiality:** Information regarding complaints will be handled sensitively and shared only with those who need to know.
- **Fairness and Transparency:** Complaints will be managed impartially, following a clear and consistent process.
- **Responsiveness:** Complaints will be addressed promptly, with regular communication provided to the complainant.
- **Protection from Reprisal:** Individuals who raise concerns or complaints will not experience discrimination or retaliation.

Definitions

- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction regarding child protection practices, conduct, or decision-making.
- **Child Protection Concern:** Any issue relating to the welfare, safety, or rights of a child.
- **Complainant:** The person making the complaint.

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How to Make a Complaint

Complaints may be made verbally or in writing to any member of staff. They may also be submitted anonymously. Complaints can be made through: - In-person reporting - Email or written correspondence - Phone calls (if applicable)

Designated Persons:

Síle Penkert – sile@garterlane.ie

Derek Corcoran – Derek@garterlane.ie

Complaint Handling Procedure

Step 1: Acknowledge the Complaint

- The complaint will be acknowledged within **3 working days**.
- Immediate action will be taken if the child is at risk of harm.

Step 2: Assess and Record the Complaint

- All complaints will be documented in the Complaint Register.
- The designated Child Protection Officer will assess the nature and severity of the complaint.

Step 3: Investigation

- An impartial investigation will be conducted.
- Investigations may involve speaking with the complainant, relevant staff, and any children involved.
- External authorities (e.g., child protection services, police) will be notified where required by law.

Step 4: Resolution and Response

- Outcomes may include corrective actions, training, disciplinary measures, or policy changes.
- The complainant will be informed of the outcome, within the limits of confidentiality and privacy laws.

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Step 5: Review and Close

- The case will be reviewed to ensure all actions were completed.
- The complaint will be formally closed in the register.

Mandatory Reporting

All staff are required to follow mandatory reporting laws. Any suspicion of abuse or neglect must be reported immediately to the relevant authorities, regardless of whether a complaint has been made.

Support Available

Support will be offered to: - Children affected by the concern - Complainants - Staff or volunteers involved

Support may include counselling, referral services, or internal welfare assistance.

Appeals Process

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome, they may request an internal review or lodge a complaint with an external oversight body.

Continuous Improvement

Regular reviews of complaint records will be conducted to identify areas for improvement in child protection practices and organisational processes.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every **two years** or sooner if legislative or organisational changes require it.

End of Policy