

Date Amendments agreed by Trustees: August 2015

Date of next Review: August 2016

# **CHRISTIAN FAMILY CONCERN**

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Christian Family Concern strives to provide quality services. The staff work very hard to build positive relationships with parents/carers, children, and other people with whom they come into contact in the course of their work. However, the charity is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints.

If anyone has concerns about the charity, we encourage them to talk to a member of staff without delay. We stress that there is a clear difference between an informal concern and a formal complaint. We take informal concerns seriously, and as a result few develop into formal complaints, so it is rare for a formal complaint to reach Stage 3 of our procedures.

This policy is available on request from the Units and Wallis offices and is given to new staff and to everyone when they start using the charity's services. It is available to view on the charity's website.

### **2. PURPOSE**

This policy sets out a clear system for resolving complaints in order to restore and develop positive and harmonious working practices.

Staff want to know if there is a problem so that they can take action before it seriously affects the work.

### **3. PRINCIPLES**

We regard the children's welfare to be of prime importance, as required by law.

Parents are assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect the service we offer.

We aim to resolve any complaint at the earliest possible stage of our procedures, as a problem addressed at an early stage is often more easily resolved.

We will be fair, open and honest treating complaints seriously and giving careful consideration to each one.

We will provide sufficient opportunity for complaints to be fully discussed in a confidential and sensitive manner.

We will respond as promptly and positively as we can to all concerns and complaints with a focus on achieving an outcome that leaves everybody satisfied wherever possible.

Staff dealing with formal complaints will ensure that complainants are given:

- a copy of the Complaints Policy when a formal complaint is first made;
- information about which stage the complaint is being dealt with;
- clear information on the outcome of each stage together with details of how to move on to the next stage within the time limits if the complainant is not satisfied.

#### **4. PROCESS**

The process of dealing with complaints is divided into different stages, dealt with by different managers at progressively more senior levels in the charity, so that impartiality and fairness are built into the process.

In the event of a manager being on leave, either their deputy will manage the stage, or the complaint will proceed to the next higher stage.

##### **STAGE 1: INFORMAL EXPRESSION OF CONCERN**

Early raising of a concern often means that it can be more easily resolved through discussion and many issues can be resolved on the spot through discussion, with apologies where necessary.

A first response will be provided within one working day. At the end of the conversation the staff member will say that they will bring the concern to the Unit Manager's attention, and that the service user has the right to make a formal complaint to the Unit Manager if they wish to do so.

##### **STAGE 2: FORMAL COMPLAINT RECEIVED BY UNIT MANAGER**

The Unit Manager will manage and complete stage 2 within 10 working days. If this is not possible, they will keep the complainant informed of the reasons and give a date by which a written stage 2 decision will be given.

The Unit Manager's role is:

- to clarify and confirm with the complainant the specific details of the complaint;
- to ensure an investigation is undertaken to establish the facts;
- to make the stage 2 decision and give a written response with an explanation of the reasons. The letter will also inform the complainant that if they are not satisfied, they can appeal in writing to the Operations Manager at Wallis House within 10 working days, stating which issues they are unhappy about, and what they would like to see happen.

(If the complaint is about the Operations Manager, or if the Operations Manager has been substantially involved at stage 1, the matter should be referred to the charity's Chair of Trustees who will arrange for it to be investigated by an independent

person who may be a Trustee. In these circumstances, the stage 2 decision will be made and communicated to the complainant by a Trustee who is not the Chair of Trustees. The letter will inform the complainant that if they are not satisfied, they can appeal in writing to the Chair of Trustees within 10 working days, stating which issues are unresolved, and what they would like to see happen. If the Operations Manager appeals, it will be dealt with at Stage 4)

### **STAGE 3: FORMAL WRITTEN COMPLAINT RECEIVED BY OPERATIONS MANAGER**

The Operations Manager will normally complete stage 3, within 10 working days. If this timescale is not feasible, the Operations Manager will keep the complainant informed of the reasons and give a date by which a written stage 3 decision will be given.

The Operations Manager's role is:

- to acknowledge the written complaint within 3 working days;
- to undertake any further investigation needed;
- to make the Stage 3 decision, and give a written response with an explanation of the reasons. The letter will also inform the complainant that if they are not satisfied, they can proceed to stage 4 by making a written appeal to the Chair of Trustees within 10 working days, stating which issues are unresolved, and what they would like to see happen. The letter should be marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to the Chair of Trustees, at Wallis House.

### **STAGE 4: FORMAL APPEAL TO THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES**

Trustees provide the final level of appeal within the charity.

The Chair of Trustees will acknowledge the letter within 5 working days, state that it is receiving attention and give the name of the Trustee who will manage stage 4 and be their point of contact regarding the appeal.

At the end of stage 4 the Panel Chair will write to the employee to notify them of the Panel's decisions made, with an explanation of the reasons and that if they wish to take the matter further, who they can raise the issue with and within what timescale, eg Ofsted, Environmental Health, etc

In the case of a vexatious complaint where, despite completing the stages of the Complaints Policy, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Trustees is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the charity may consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.