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MEADOWS SCHOOL

**COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATION
POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

There are two Complaints Procedures available to young people living at Meadows School.

1. Barnardo's Complaints Procedure

2. Local Authority Complaints Procedure

Both processes are explained to young people when they join Meadows, and copies of the relevant information given to them at the Placement Meeting. At this meeting the telephone number of the Complaints Officer of their placing authority is written into the young person's hand book.

It is not intended that all problems that arise in the day to day handling of child care services should automatically be elevated to the status of a complaint. A matter, which is promptly resolved to everyone's satisfaction when drawn to the attention of a member of staff, is not something that requires referral to the procedure, although it is recorded.

Efforts to resolve matters will include discussion and reconsideration as well as explanations of decisions made and actions taken. However, attempts at problem solving will not be used by staff to divert an eligible person from lodging a complaint under the statutory procedure.

Complaints and representations are recorded in the Complaints Book and copies of documents put on resident's files. The Complaints Book is inspected monthly by the Regulations 33 Visitor.

Barnardo's Complaint Procedure

Meadows School agree with Barnardo's policy to develop a culture which encourages young people to make their views known and which responds positively to their concerns and complaints, however difficult and painful this may be at times. It must be a culture, which enables both staff and Barnardo's to learn from complaints to improve practice and policy. Complaints should be seen as a positive, not a negative force within Barnardo's.

A complaint may be about a service that is being provided, the lack of a service provision, the actions of a member of staff, a third party, another pupil, by family members, decisions taken by individuals or Barnardo's policy or procedural issues, or a combination of these factors. It may be specific or expressed as a general dissatisfaction.

Normally good practice should resolve, to the young person's satisfaction, the queries and grumbles, which are part of the day to day experiences within the school. However, if this is not possible, the young person has the right to pursue the issue via the complaints procedure.

The main principles underlying Barnardo's Complaints Policy and Procedure are:

- Complaints should be resolved as close to the point of service delivery and as quickly as possible
- Young people must be offered every assistance in resolving their complaints
- Pupils or family member will not suffer any disadvantage, discrimination or withdrawal of service as a consequence of making a complaint and should be treated with respect and dignity at all times
- Complaints, however trivial they may appear, are very real to the young person and must be accorded full and proper attention at all times
- All complaints must be recorded in writing on the appropriate forms and processed according to Barnardo's Policy and Procedures
- Solutions offered must comply with Barnardo's Policies and Procedures and any promises of action must be kept

Barnardo's Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure has two main parts, the Informal stage and the Formal stages. Barnardo's try to resolve problems using the informal stage, but if this is unsuccessful the formal stages can be used to ensure the matter is fully investigated and reviewed.

The Formal stage may be used from the outset if desired.

The Informal Stage

1. The young person tells a member of staff that s/he wants to use the complaints procedure to deal with the problem identified OR sent a contact card directly to Barnardo's Complaints Officer at Head Office.
2. When the young person decides to use the complaints procedure, Barnardo's offers a choice of advocates (independent if required) to support the person in the complaints procedure OR help the young person arrange to have a friend/relative carer involved.
3. If the use of this advocate fails to sort things out, or if the young person is not happy with the result then the procedure moves to Formal Stage One.

Formal Stage One

1. The problem has not been resolved through the informal stage.

2. To formally complain the young person tells a member of staff or writes to Barnardo's Complaints Officer.
3. Support is available from staff and advocates for the young person.
4. Barnardo's appoint an Investigating Officer when they are told the young person wants the problem dealt with through the Formal Complaints Procedure.
5. The investigating officer will visit and talk to everyone who is involved, looking at all points of view, including the young person's.
6. Barnardo's will appoint an independent person, who is completely independent of Barnardo's to provide an independent view of the complaint and to comment on the way it has been dealt with. The young person can contact the independent person or investigating officer at any time – staff or advocates can assist the young person in this.
7. When the investigating officer has talked to everyone they will write a report setting out all that has happened and make recommendations as to the best way of solving the problem. They will send this report to Barnardo's Divisional Director. The independent person will also send their report to the Divisional Director. The young person can send written comments relating to the complaint. The Director considers all the information received and will discuss this with the independent person before writing a formal response to the complaint. The complaints officer co-ordinates the written information to all interested parties.
8. If the young person is not satisfied with the response they take the complaint to Stage Two.

Formal Stage Two

1. If the young person is not happy with the result of the investigation and the formal response to the complaint s/he must notify the complaints officer within 28 days and ask for the complaint to be heard by a Review Panel. An advocate or staff member can assist the young person in this process.
2. The complaints officer will set up a review panel to go over everything that has happened so far. The panel will have 3 people – 2 from Barnardo's (senior staff who has had nothing to do with the complaint) and the third person will be an independent person who will chair the panel hearing and will be completely independent of Barnardo's.
3. The Review Panel will meet within 28 days of the request. The panel will look at the written information relating to the complaint and will ask the young person to attend with his/her advocate or anyone else invited by the young person. The Panel will arrange for staff concerned with the complaint to attend.

4. When the Panel has listened to all points of view and read all the written information, the hearing will end. The Panel will consider all the information and make its recommendations within 24 hours of the end of the hearing.
5. The young person will receive a copy of the Panel's report, which is sent to Barnardo's Director of Child Care. The Director of Child Care will discuss the panel's report with the chair of the panel – who is the independent person, before writing Barnardo's formal response. The Director's decision is final and it will be sent to all parties, in writing, within 28 days of the review panel making its recommendations.
6. Serious complaints against the school or staff of the school are notified to the National Care Standards Commission.

The Barnardo's Complaints Officer is Martin Ruddock based at:

**Barnardo's
Tanners Lane
Barkingside
Ilford
Essex
IG6 1QG**

Tel: 020 8550 8822

The Barnardo's Children's Rights Officer is Irene Levine based at:

**Barnardo's
Tanners Lane
Barkingside
Ilford
Essex
IG6 1QG**

Tel: 020 8498 5682

Paul Coop, Locality Manager, National Care Standards Commission

Tel No:- 01622 724950