

## **Representations & Complaints Procedure**

### **Core Assets Children's Services - Representations & Complaints Guide**

#### **Introduction to our Complaints Process**

We encourage all our staff to be receptive and sensitive at all times to representations and complaints made about our services. No individual or organisation is perfect and we can always learn from what people have to say about us.

We invite you to say at once if you are not happy with any aspect of the service we are providing or planning to provide, so that matters can be resolved as soon as they arise, without developing into a complaint.

When a complaint does arise, we seek to create an atmosphere in which a child/young person, parent or other responsible adult can confidently make a representation or complaint knowing that it will be dealt with promptly and with fairness.

You may make a complaint about services that you or your family have received, or have not received. You may also make a complaint on behalf of a child who is using or seeking to use Core Assets Children's Services.

Core Assets Children's Services want to assure you that no person will be subject to any reprisal, neither will the service they receive be reduced, as a result of making a complaint.

If you need any help or support at all in making your complaint, or in communicating what you want to say, Core Assets Children's Services will make sure that you receive that help.

It is important for you to be aware that you must make your complaint **within one year** of the matters which are the subject of your complaint taking place. If your complaint is made later than this, the Core Assets Children's Services Complaints Manager will exercise discretion as to whether or not to accept your complaint. In making this decision, they will consider the reasons you give for not making your complaint nearer the time, and whether or not it is still possible to investigate your complaint fairly, despite the passage of time. This decision will be given to you in writing, with reasons.

If you were a child at the time of the events, your complaint will be accepted and investigated as fairly and thoroughly as possible.

All complaints will be fully recorded in writing. The written record, including details of the investigation made, the outcome and any actions taken as a result, will be retained for at least three years from the close of the complaint process.

Organisations who monitor our work, such as Ofsted and CQC, have the right to ask for details of any complaints made about us. Information about a complaint may also be passed to organisations who commission our work, such as local authorities.

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### **What happens if I make a Complaint?**

Core Assets Children's Services have a three stage process, in order to make sure that we respond to complaints as swiftly and effectively as possible:

Stage One	Local – Problem Solving
Stage Two	Independent Investigation
Stage Three	Complaints Review Panel

### **Stage One –Local Problem Solving**

If you have a complaint, please tell the Core Assets Children's Services staff with whom you are working, or their manager. You can do this by writing to them, or by ringing and asking for what you say to be written down as a complaint, or face to face, being clear that you want what you are saying to be regarded as a complaint at Stage One of the process.

Those staff will work with you to resolve the issue by clarifying the concerns, negotiating an improved situation, and taking practical action. When this process is complete the manager will write to you to confirm what has been agreed. This letter should be sent within ten working days, or a maximum of twenty working days with your agreement, from the date of your complaint.

The majority of complaints are resolved in this manner, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

If you do not feel that your complaint has been resolved by this process, you are entitled to move to Stage Two. You may request this either by replying to the letter you receive at the end of Stage One, or by contacting the Core Assets Children's Services Complaints Manager on 01527 556480. (Full contact details appear at the end of this Guide.)

You may request for your complaint to be considered at Stage Two from the outset, if you have good reason to believe it cannot be fairly considered by the staff who are working closely with you – perhaps because it concerns a manager or senior manager, or perhaps because of the serious nature of your complaint.

### **Stage Two – Independent Investigation**

If the issue has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, we consider it important that someone independent of the immediate situation should look into the matter.

At this stage the investigation will be carried out by an independent investigator identified by the quality assurance team who has had no previous involvement with the matter concerned. This may be a member of the quality assurance team or an external contracted individual with relevant qualifications and experience. Any such appointment will be made known to and discussed with all parties, including you as the complainant, before the investigation begins.

The independent investigator will speak to you in order to fully understand the complaint, will interview other people concerned, and will have access to relevant paperwork, subject to

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permissions being given. You will be asked for your permission. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the views of children will be sought and taken into account in the light of their age and understanding.

A report will be produced for the Core Assets Children's Services Complaints Manager with the Investigator's findings, conclusions and recommendations for action. The independent investigator will be asked to produce this report within 20 working days from the date of the agreed written statement of your complaint. The Complaints Manager will then write to you within 5 working days of receiving the independent investigator's final report, to let you know the decisions that have been made as a result of the investigation. Some or all of the Investigator's report may be made available to you, dependent upon confidentiality and data protection issues.

If it is not possible to complete these processes within the intended timescales, we will keep you informed of the reasons and expected time scales, and seek your agreement.

### **Stage Three – Complaints Review Panel**

If you remain dissatisfied with the response at Stage Two, you may request that a complaints review panel be set up to consider the complaint investigation and its findings. The request must be received in writing within 20 working days of you receiving the outcome in writing of the Stage Two independent investigation, and must give your reasons for the request.

The panel will consist of an Executive Director and a senior manager within Core Assets Group, who have not been involved in the investigation of your complaint, and another person who is appropriately qualified and experienced, and is independent of Core Assets Group.

The date and time of the panel will be agreed with you, and you will be invited to attend in order to give your views. You may be supported and helped by a family member, friend, or other suitable person. This may not be a solicitor or barrister, since this is not a judicial hearing.

You will receive an initial response from the panel within 24 hours, and a written response within 5 working days.

This marks the final stage of the Core Assets Children's Services representations and complaints process.

### **If you remain dissatisfied**

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint at the end of Stage Three, there may be other organisations to whom you can take the issue. If the service provided to you by Core Assets Children's Services is regulated by Ofsted, you may make your complaint to this organisation in certain cases, and contact information is available at the end of this Guide.

Similarly, the National Association of Child Contact Centres is responsible for registering our Child Contact Services and can be contacted in the event that you are not satisfied with the

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investigation of your complaint by Core Assets Children's Services, using contact details provided at the end of this guide.

CQC is responsible for the registration of Domiciliary Care Services. CQC cannot investigate individual complaints but will take any issues raised with them into consideration in their inspections of services.

If the service you receive is paid for by your local authority, you may complain to them if you are not satisfied with the response from Core Assets Children's Services.

Finally, the local government ombudsman may investigate in certain situations, including situations where you pay for services yourself.

Information about all these and other relevant organisations is included.

### **Useful Contact Details**

#### **Core Assets Children's Services Complaints Manager**

Malvern View, Saxon Business Park,  
Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior,  
Bromsgrove, Worcs  
B60 4PH  
Tel: 01527 556480 Fax: 01527 578176  
[contactus@coreassets.com](mailto:contactus@coreassets.com)

#### **Regulatory Body for Adoption Support Agencies, Adoption Agencies and Fostering Services:**

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED)  
Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

#### **Registering Body for Child Contact Services:**

National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Offices  
Friary Chambers  
26 – 34 Friar Lane  
Nottingham  
NG1 6 DQ  
Telephone 0845 4500 280  
Email: [contact@naccc.org.uk](mailto:contact@naccc.org.uk)

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### **Regulatory Body for Domiciliary Care – England:**

Care Quality Commission National Correspondence  
Citygate  
Gallowgate  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 4PA  
03000 616161  
Website: [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

### **The Office of the Children's Commissioner**

Sanctuary Buildings  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT  
Tel: 020 7783 8330  
Email: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

### **The Local Government Ombudsman,**

53- 55 Butts Road  
Coventry  
CV1 3BH.  
Phone: 0300 061 0614  
[www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)