Home-Start Network Compliments, Concerns and Complaints Policy



We inspire **growth**

We prioritise **kindness**

We achieve **together**

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Signed

A Allen

Chair

date

19/3/26

review

MAR '27

1 Introduction

1.1 Scope

Home-Start aims to provide a high-quality, responsive service. We welcome opportunities to monitor and improve our services. We aim to work in an open and accountable way. We have a compliments, concerns and complaints policy and procedure to support transparency, fairness and a culture of continuous improvement. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

1.2 Complimenting Our Service

Compliments are valuable, welcome and important and when they are received, either verbally or in writing, they will be recorded. Compliments enable us to:

- understand that our service is being provided to the satisfaction of all third parties
- provide positive feedback to our staff and volunteers
- influence our organisational and service development
- inform our quality assurance programme

It is good practice to acknowledge compliments.

1.3 Concerns And Complaints About Our Service

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'a situation or instance where either an individual or organisation considers that Home-Start has fallen short of their reasonable expectations and the complainant wishes to express their dissatisfaction about the action or a lack of action'. Concerns/complaints can include GDPR concerns/complaints.

Raising a concern or complaint provides Home-Start [insert name] with an opportunity to learn and improve. The Board of Trustees need to know about concerns and complaints. We will always take your concerns or complaints seriously and record or respond to these as set out in the procedure which forms part of this policy.

1.4 Who Can Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint about Home-Start?

Anyone who encounters Home-Start can raise a concern/make a complaint, this could include:

- families who use Home-Start services
- carers or friends of people using a Home-Start service
- customers using Home-Start shops (if applicable)
- people who volunteer for Home-Start or another organisation
- people who work for partner agencies
- contractors or third parties which come into contact with Home-Start
- funders, grant making bodies
- members of the public.

This policy does not apply to any of the following:

- A safeguarding or child protection concern. Please see our Safeguarding Policy on how to raise concerns.
- An allegation against a member of staff or a volunteer in relation to safeguarding or child protection. Please see our Safeguarding Policy.
- Employees of Home-Start: The complaints policy and procedure is separate and distinct from the grievance and disciplinary procedures which enables employees to raise grievances in connection with their condition of employment and other employment-related matters.
- The disciplinary procedure: is used by the employer when an employee may be in breach of the terms of employment. However, an investigation following a complaint may lead to disciplinary issues.

1.5 Our Approach

We undertake to ensure that:

- The process is as straightforward as possible to make a compliment, raise a concern or a complaint.
- Procedures are as fair, easy and transparent as possible for people who want to raise a concern or make a complaint.
- Staff and volunteers are sensitive and helpful to the complainant, and those acting on their behalf.
- Concerns and complaints are dealt with promptly, courteously, and discreetly (and are confidential where appropriate).
- Concerns and complaints will be recorded and reported to the Board of Trustees.
- Concerns or complaints made in good faith do not harm or prejudice the service that is given to the person who made the complaint.

- Concerns and complaints are dealt with efficiently, appropriately and are investigated within the agreed time frames set out in the policy.
- We respond decisively with an explanation, an apology where we have been at fault, or with information on the outcome.
- We learn from complaints and use them to make improvements in the way Home-Start and the wider Home-Start network work.

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If you have a complaint about Home-Start [insert name] it can be submitted in any of the following ways:

- By telephone [insert details]
- By email (insert details]
- Or, if you prefer you can complete a form [the Home-Start should explain where this can be obtained e.g. from the website, by contacting...]

Home-Start hope that the majority of concerns/ complaints can be dealt with informally, but if they are not resolved to the satisfaction of the person raising the matter, they can progress to Stage 2 and Stage 3 are available to support complainants.

Please provide a full explanation of the problem, how and when it occurred and the effect on you and what you think Home-Start [insert name] should do to put things right.

2. Concerns and Complaints Procedure

2.1 Stage One: Informal Stage

- To raise a concern or make an initial complaint (Stage 1), please contact the service to speak to the individual(s) concerned or the senior staff member at the service.
- If you are unsure who to contact or do not wish to speak to the person concerned or senior staff member, please email [insert details of the LHS contact for complaints] and your concern/complaint will be directed to the appropriate person.
- Please provide your contact details and whether you are raising a concern or making a complaint and explain the situation as clearly and as fully as possible. We may need to contact you to obtain further details about what happened. We aim to resolve the issue as promptly as possible.
- If you have asked someone else to pursue your concern/complaint on your behalf, you will need to inform Home-Start that you give your consent for this individual to pursue the matter.
- All complaints will be acknowledged by the member of staff responsible for complaints within 10 working days, and where possible will aim to resolve it within this timeframe.
- We will look into your concern/complaint and let you know of any remedial action that will be taken to avoid a similar situation occurring in future.

- If the person/organisation raising the matter did not make it clear if it was a concern or complaint someone from Home-Start will ask for clarification as to whether you are raising the matter as a concern or a complaint.

2.2 Stage Two: Formally Registering a Complaint

- If you are not satisfied with the response at Stage 1 to a complaint you raised it can move to Stage 2.
- At this stage your complaint may require us to complete a more detailed investigation.
- If you have **not** already done so, we ask that you put your complaint in writing and send it [include details]. If you have already put the matter in writing but are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 then please notify us that you want to move to Stage 2 of the complaints process.
- We will acknowledge a complaint which has moved to Stage 2 within 10 working days and we will try to resolve it within these timeframes.
- If your complaint needs further investigation and cannot be resolved within 10 working days we will provide you with an expected timescale for our response and keep you up to date at regular intervals throughout our investigation. We will also tell you who is managing your complaint so you have a point of contact should you need to get in touch with us. You should expect a full response from us within 20 working days from the date we received your complaint.
- If you are not satisfied with the response at Stage 2 your complaint can be moved to Stage 3.

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2.3 Stage Three: Appeal:

- If you are not satisfied with the way the complaint was managed at Stage 2 you have the right to ask us to review your complaint.
- Please outline the reasons for your dissatisfaction in writing.
- At Stage 3 your letter will be acknowledged within 10 working days of receipt and we aim to provide a full written response within 25 working days. If there are delays, you will be informed about the timeframes.
- This is the final stage in the complaints procedure. If, following completion of Stage 3, you are still not satisfied this does not affect your right to contact the Charity Commission, or, in the case of fundraising complaints, the Fundraising Regulator.

If your complaint is about a fundraising issue you can also contact the Fundraising Regulator to access their independent complaints procedure https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/) or Scottish Fundraising Adjudication Panel

You can also lodge a complaint with the Charity Commission who may be able to advise on the matter. The Charity Commission can be contacted at: http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About_us/Contacting_us/default.aspx

The timeline for responding to any item received by post commences on the date the item arrives at our office.

3. Monitoring of Concerns and Complaints

All concerns and complaints will be recorded in a concerns/complaints log regardless of whether or not the complaint was upheld or not. This is to enable us to analyse concerns and complaints and whether there is any learning arising from them.

Complaints will be tracked and a report will be prepared by the member of staff responsible for concluding the complaint providing an overview of the complaint and how it was resolved. The report will also set out the findings and recommendations for measures to be taken to prevent further complaints of this nature or to improve/adapt/adjust our services to minimise the likelihood of any further complaints.

Quarterly reviews of any concerns/complaints will be considered by the senior leadership team and trustees to consider if there is any learning from the complaint or any further actions needed to prevent further complaints and to continually improve our services.

Home-Start UK is a national charity which works in partnership with a network of local Home-Starts. Home-Start UK is not a head office or governing body for Home-Starts around the country, although we share a common brand. Each local Home-Start is an independent charity with its own Board of Trustees who are responsible for the staff employed by the local Home-Start and its day to day running and Home-Start UK is not part of [insert name] complaints process. Therefore, if a complaint about [insert name] is sent to Home-Start UK Home-Start UK will forward your complaint to Home-Start [insert name] (unless you ask Home-Start UK not to) and ask Home-Start [insert name] to follow our complaints process. (the Home-Start UK privacy notice is available here). Home-Start UK uses its discretion to consider whether to investigate if local Home-Start complaints process has been exhausted if a complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome.

3. Retention of Concerns and Complaints

Concerns and complaints and supporting documentation relating to these should be retained for a period of 7 years. This information should be confidential. If the complaint involves a staff member and involves a family being supported the information should be retained here and deleted elsewhere when the relevant retention period has been reached.

Appendix 1

Name and Address of (Compliment/Complainant)	
Content of compliment, concern or complaint Brief summary of compliment, concern or complaint – attach written correspondence if available	
To be completed by service [Insert name]	
Stage One	Dates
Compliment, concern or complaint received	
Compliment, concern or complaint acknowledged. Concerns will usually be responded to verbally (but there should be a record of them.	
Compliment, concern or complaint recorded	
Copy to senior staff member	
Stage Two (if applicable)	Dates (*or name)
Reply by complaint	
Reply acknowledged	
Reply recorded	
Copy to chairperson	
Investigation of complaint commenced	
Name(s) of person(s) investigating complaint	*
Investigation completed, outcome recorded	
Written response sent to Complainant	
(If applicable) local- Home-Start _____	Complaint No.:
Stage Three (if applicable)	
Review requested	
Review acknowledged	

Review conducted (by whom) and dates	
Review decision	
Outcome communicated	

Version Number	Summary of changes made	Authorised by	Date issued
2.0	The previous policy did not include compliments, concerns and complaints which are now part of the policy	Bec Laing	March 2024
	The earlier version of the policy did not require a record of concerns to be shared with with trustees	Bec Laing	March 2024
	This version includes three clearer stages in the process of responding to concerns/complaints to provide a clearer escalation route for people who are dissatisfied with the initial outcome of the complaint	Bec Laing	March 2024
	In the past HSUK would have to ask the complainant for their permission to refer a complaint to a local HS. This version explains that HSUK will forward the concern/complaint to the Home-Start concerned (unless the individual asks not to) in order to action the concern/complaint	Bec Laing	March 2024
	HSUK can use its discretion to consider whether to investigate when the LHS complaints process has been exhausted if the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome	Bec Laing	March 2024
	There was no information in the previous policy about the retention of complaints but a 7 year period for retaining complaints has been introduced	Bec Laing	March 2024