



Complaints Procedure Policy

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Table of Contents

Document Control	3
Introduction	4
Regulations and Standards	4
Who Can Make a Complaint?	5
Help to Make a Complaint	6
The Complaint Stages	7
Other Important Contacts.....	8

Document Control

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Author	Dan Boxall-Simpson
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Countersignature	Sara Gullick

Introduction

We aim to always provide a service with integrity and care. If you are not satisfied with our service, then we would like to know. The EPIC Family CIC views complaints, comments and compliments as an opportunity to improve our services. We are committed to resolving any worries or concerns and finding positive outcomes.

Regulations and Standards

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

Regulation 18 – Independent fostering agencies: representation and complaints

Fostering services: National Minimum Standards

Standard 1 – The child’s wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them

Standard 21.11 – Information about the procedures for dealing with complaints and representations are widely available

Training and Development Standards

Standard 2 – Understand your role as a foster carer

Standard 4 – Know how to communicate effectively

At The EPIC Family CIC, it is our policy that no person who is subject of a complaint, takes part in its consideration, other than if the registered manager considers it appropriate at the informal or local stage. We will ensure that no individual will suffer discrimination, disadvantage, withdrawal or reduction of a service as a result of making a complaint.

This complaints procedure will be made known to any child placed by the agency, their parents/guardians and any persons working for the purposes of the agency (e.g. staff (employed or independent), carers, prospective carers, those enquiring about becoming a foster parent and local authorities etc)

Who Can Make a Complaint?

A child, a parent or foster parent of a child, a foster parent or any person or organization for whom the agency provides a service, can make a complaint. If necessary, someone else can act on behalf of the person who wants to complain.

If a child/young person being cared for by a fostering family provided by The EPIC Family CIC wishes to make a complaint, they will be supported to do so, whether this is directed towards the agency or the placing authority. In the first instance it is hoped that an informal resolution will be found.

The child/young person will be encouraged to pursue complaints and will be reassured that no reprisals will be made against them as a result. They will also be assured that their complaint will be taken seriously and that they will receive notification of the outcome.

All serious complaints about a foster parent approved by the agency will be notified to the regulatory authority.

If a child or foster parent is unhappy about a change in their care plan or their placement plan, this should be brought to the attention of their allocated social worker, who may be able to resolve the matter. Alternatively, the independent reviewing officer may be contacted.

It is the role of the independent reviewing officer to make sure that the child who is looked after is aware of the local authority's complaints procedure, which must comply with the Children Act 1989 and associated regulations, and to assist the child to access independent support and advice to enable them to use this procedure, if they wish to do so.

Help to Make a Complaint

Sometimes children and adults need help and support to make a complaint.

Generally, when making a complaint, the following will be taken into consideration:

- Who is your complaint against?
- What is your complaint about?
- What would you like to see happen to resolve the issue?

The child/young person may have support from their parent, social worker, independent advocate or foster parent.

Foster parents may enlist the help of a supporter or advocate, or their supervising social worker as appropriate, to make a complaint about the agency under this procedure, or where appropriate, about the placing authority under the relevant local authority's complaints procedure.

The Complaint Stages

Stage One

Initial complaints are to be resolved at local level, in the form of a meeting between complainant and the supervising social worker and/or manager, once the complaint has been received in writing or recorded by other means of communication. A letter of resolution or outcome will be issued in response to stage one complaints by the fostering manager, including details of how the matter was investigated.

Stage Two

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response received at stage one, or if they require the matter not to be dealt with by the manager, then a stage two complaint will be activated.

The complainant must put their complaint in writing to the fostering manager, who will contact the complainant within 7 working days to advise that they have passed this to the service manager or instructed an independent complaints investigating officer in relation to the complaint and will advise them of their name and the expected time-frame for the investigation.

A report will be completed following the investigation, detailing how the matter was investigated, by whom and what outcome was reached, with the relevant evidence to support the report's conclusion.

Stage Three

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a stage two investigation, the final stage three investigation will commence. This must be confirmed to one of the Directors of The EPIC Family CIC, in writing, including the reasons for their dissatisfaction. They will undertake to arrange for the case to be reviewed by an independent panel within 30 days.

The Panel will be made up of:

- A fostering panel member
- The Responsible Individual
- A manager or staff member of the service
- An independent individual of such background and experience as required
- A chairperson, if none of the above can fulfil that role

No person implicated in a complaint, or a relative or close association of theirs, may sit on the panel or be involved in any investigation. The panel will be constituted in such a way as to afford true, independent appraisal of the complaint. The panel will consider the documentation available in relation to the complaint and any further written representations that the complainant wishes to make in relation to the investigation. The panel will reach a decision/recommendation within 24 hours of meeting and the complainant will be advised of the outcome, in report form, to include any actions in order to resolve the situation within 7 days.

Other Important Contacts

The Children's Commissioner for England

Tel: 0844 800 9113

Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

26-32 Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Tel: 08456 404040

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk