

## **Complaints Policy & Procedural Guidelines**

South West Family Services also operates as Family Time South West and Devon Family Services. We are a Registered Company in the United Kingdom. **Registration Number:** 14479035.

1. We aim to provide families and referrers with the best possible service, and we value openness and honesty, opinions, comments and suggestions. Which are always welcome from clients, service users, professionals and referrers. We accept that sometimes we may get things wrong, and you may want to make a complaint. We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and to improve our services, as well as a chance to put things right for the person who has made the complaint. We also recognise emotions within this landscape can be heightened and the services we provide can be very difficult for some, so we are happy to explore those concerns in line with this policy.
2. We may amend this policy and the procedures within it at any time, in our absolute discretion, to ensure it stays up-to-date, effective, and compliant.

### **Stage 1**

3. If you have a complaint about our service we would like to explore it as soon as possible. Many complaints can be resolved informally, and we encourage you to speak to the team member or contact the office and speak to your case manager or the senior management team.
4. If you are a stakeholder, commissioned service, partner or wishing to complain as an organisation this policy and procedure still applies if the complaint is about us.
5. If you are not satisfied you may make a formal complaint in line with this policy. There are four stages to the complaint's procedure with stage 1, the informal process always being the first. Following stage one, if you are still unhappy the following details the next stage:

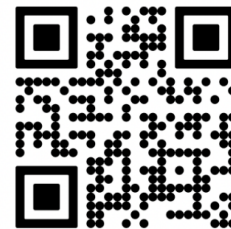
### **Stage 2**

6. Your complaint should be put in writing and sent to us by email to at office@southwestfamilyservices.com for attention of the Director.

It should clearly state the following:

- What you are unhappy about.
- Give details about what has happened from your perspective.
- Why something has caused you concern.
- What you would like to happen to put things right.

If we receive a complaint which does not contain this information, we may ask you for further details

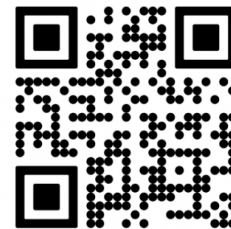


to ensure we can respond appropriately and work towards a fair and evidence-based conclusion.

7. We will acknowledge your correspondence within 5 working days and will tell you when you can expect a reply.
8. Your complaint will be investigated and if it relates to a specific person or persons, they will be informed and given an opportunity to respond. If appropriate, we may clarify or seek additional information from you or may speak to any witnesses to events. Please note if we need to speak with any other clients or if applicable the 'other parent' we will do so and will be as discreet around the details of your complaint as is reasonable whilst ensuring we gather the full details to allow us to respond appropriately.
9. If possible you will receive a reply to your complaint within fifteen working days. If this is not possible for any reason a progress report will be sent to you with a new date when the investigation should be completed.
10. The reply you receive will inform you of the action taken to investigate the complaint, whether it has been upheld or not, and any conclusions or action taken because of the complaint. You will also be informed how to progress to the next stage if you do not feel the problem has been satisfactorily resolved.

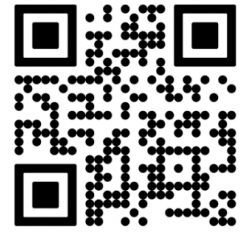
### **Stage 3**

11. If you feel your problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1 or 2 you should notify us that you wish to take it further. This must be done within 5 working days of receiving the response detailed above.
12. We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and will tell you when you can expect a reply. This should be within 15 working days. If this is not possible for any reason a progress report will be sent to you with a new date when the investigation should be completed.
13. At stage 3 we will review the responses previously provided but refrain from duplicating those responses. If your complaint has moved to stage 3 you will need to specify what you are not satisfied with for us to further investigate or re-investigate.
14. We will investigate the facts of the complaint internally or may designate another person within our organisation or from a suitably approved external agency if appropriate.
15. The reply you receive will inform you of the action taken to investigate the complaint, whether it has been upheld or not, and any conclusions or action taken because of the complaint. You will also be informed how to progress to the next stage if you do not feel the problem has been satisfactorily resolved.



## Stage 4

16. If you are not happy with the outcome of the previous stages, you must inform us. This must be within 5 days of receiving the response. Further signposting will be provided if you are not satisfied at this stage.
17. We are an accredited member of the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC). If after this procedure has been carried out you are still not happy with the response then you may write to the Chief Executive, NACCC, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Friary Chambers, 26-34 Friar Lane, Nottingham NG1 6DQ. It should be noted that the role of NACCC in such cases will be to ensure we have followed this complaints procedure and to assist within appropriate and recognised boundaries for those involved to reach a conclusion. NACCC's role is not to investigate the complaint again and as a membership organisation their role is to ensure we have followed this policy. NACCC are also not able to offer opinions on specific scenarios but will be able to refer you to the national standards and approved processes for the membership base.
18. Variations to the complaint's procedure
19. We may vary the procedure for good reason if appropriate. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest or to ensure an appropriate investigation.
20. Monitoring and learning
21. Written records of all complaints, including any written legal or insurance responses, will be held by us and a copy will be included in your families file if applicable.
22. Our service agreement outlines the terms between us and our clients, and this would not usually be affected by this policy. Very rarely a continued relationship may no longer be viable because of a complaint and we will be transparent with all those involved if we must end our services with you, your family, your clients or customers. We will always do our best to ensure complaints are dealt with quickly and do not affect children who are the primary focus of our organisation. If we do need to end services, we will be transparent with you and the other parties involved as to why we have reached that conclusion.
23. Details of complaints are a standard part of a family's file and are not protected information as defined by GDPR regulations. In practical terms this means if a court order or request is made to review our files the complaint and any correspondence around it would be included within those disclosures. For that reason, we would encourage you to explore and raise your complaints with us but recognise that it is not uncommon for those using our services to be unhappy with things which are often out of our control.



**Policy Dated: 01/08/2025**

**Annual Review – Due 1<sup>st</sup> March each year**