



Complaints Policy and Procedure

At TheraParent, we're committed to getting things right and building positive working relationships, however we are aware that there are times when everyone could have done things better/differently. Part of our ethos of positive working relationships is built upon clear and open discussions, which includes when there is something that somebody is not happy with. Some key components of getting things right are the ability to be reflective, the willingness to adapt and the drive to develop our service. It is important to us that our foster parents, children, staff and anyone else we work with feel listened to and valued. At TheraParent we actively listen to children and there are lots of opportunities for their voices to be listened to and heard. With that in mind, we have developed our complaints procedure, which sets out clear instructions for anyone who wishes to make a complaint.

Who can complain?

Anyone working with or for TheraParent has the right to complain under this procedure. This includes:

- All stakeholders
- Foster Parents (and their children)
- Children who are looked after
- A parent/carer of a child who is looked after
- TheraParent Staff
- Anyone receiving a service from TheraParent
- Any purchaser of our services

Anyone who wishes to make a complaint on behalf of a child may also do so under this policy, where they feel making a complaint is necessary.

Any person wishing to make a complaint must be treated with respect and understanding at all times. Thought should be given to their perception of events, and to how they are feeling. It is our aim that everyone working with TheraParent feels welcomed and valued and this includes anyone who wishes to make a complaint.

Making a complaint can seem a daunting task at times, therefore any person wishing to make a complaint has the right to bring someone to support them such as an advocate, friend or Social Worker, if they wish.

Complaints relating to the Local Authority or the Care Plan of a child

TheraParent works in close collaboration with many Local Authorities, however, are not affiliated in any way therefore if anyone wishes to make a complaint in relation to a Local Authority, they should do so by accessing the specific complaints policy for that Local Authority. We suggest that any Foster Parent or child wishing to make such a complaint seeks the advice and support of their Supervising Social Worker in the first instance as they



may be able to make an informal complaint on your behalf. If a Supervising Social Worker/TheraParent member of staff wishes to make a complaint to the Local Authority, they must first speak to their line manager who will advise on the most appropriate course of action.

If anyone is unhappy with the Care Plan or Placement Plan for a child, they should initially raise this concern with their supervising social worker, who will address the issue with the child's allocated social worker. If there is not a satisfactory response, the complaint can be forwarded to the child's Independent Reviewing Officer, who may be able to help. The Independent Reviewing Officer should also be able to offer advice to the child on accessing an independent advocate to support them with any complaint.

Should any child (or person acting on behalf of a child) feel that their complaints remain unheard, they may contact the children's commissioner as below:

Children's Commissioner for England

The Office of the Children's Commissioner
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk.

Complaints made by children in relation to their care

It is imperative that our children feel that they are listened to, and their views are valued at all times. All children have the right to complain under this policy. It is important that all complaints are handled sensitively and are always taken seriously.

Sometimes children need to make complaints about the care they are receiving. All children will have access to information about how they can complain within their children's guide, which will be issued to every child when they are initially placed.

It is not common for children to feel confident enough to complain about their care directly to their caregivers, for this reason, children will be encouraged that they can raise concerns/complaints about their care through their allocated social worker at any time. Additionally, all children will be given the details of the allocated Supervising Social Worker, who will meet with them regularly. The Supervising Social Worker will speak with the child alone regularly to ensure they have an opportunity to raise any concerns or complaints. Additionally, each child will be allocated a Life Coach, who they will meet alone at least once per month. This is a trusted adult who would be an ideal person to speak to if a child had a concern.

Any complaints made by a child must be reported to the placing authority immediately. It will be agreed between the placing authority and TheraParent what the best course of action is



from this point (and, where necessary, who should investigate). Where an allegation is made by a child, the LADO must be informed immediately.

Complaints relating to TheraParent staff, service or conduct

How do I complain?

There are 3 stages to our complaints procedure although we intend to try to deal with most complaints at Stage 1 as this is the quickest way to resolve an issue.

It is important to note that no person who is subject of a complaint will take part in the consideration of the complaint, unless in the case of it being deemed appropriate by the Registered Manager at Stage 1 (informal resolution) process only.

Stage 1 – Stage 1 is the preferred method for dealing with complaints as it is the stage which yields the fastest resolutions/outcomes for all involved. Stage 1 is known as the informal complaints stage, although this in no way means the complaint is of less importance. We will try to deal with all complaints at Stage 1 in the first instance. If Stage 1 is not sufficient, we can progress the complaint to Stage 2.

At Stage 1 a complaint can be made either in writing or verbally. Stage 1 complaints should be made to the allocated Supervising Social Worker. If the complaint is about the allocated Supervising Social Worker, the complaint should instead be made to the Social Workers' manager.

Once a Stage 1 complaint is received, a meeting will be arranged between the complainant and the Supervising Social Worker (or their manager if the complaint is about them). During this meeting, the worker will determine the reason for the complaint and together a resolution/outcome will be agreed. It is hoped that at this stage, all involved can work collectively to explore the reasons for the issue and to identify clear and timely actions to resolve the issue, resulting in all parties feeling able to continue their working relationship in a positive and constructive manner. The Supervising Social Worker (or their manager) must discuss the stage 1 complaint, along with proposed actions to resolve the complaint, with the Registered manager within 72 hours of the meeting.

A letter outlining any agreed actions/outcomes will be completed by the Registered Manager and sent to the complainant within 7 working days of the meeting.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their Stage 1 complaint, they can ask that their complaint be progressed to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Any issue which is not fully resolved in Stage 1 should progress to Stage 2; the formal complaints stage. For a Stage 2 complaint to be instigated, the complainant must put their complaint in writing to the Registered Manager (Katie Gibson-Cook). If the complaint is



in relation to the Registered Manager, the complaint should instead be sent to the Responsible Individual (Mike Spencer). The complainant will be contacted within 5 working days of receipt of their written complaint to arrange for a meeting between the complainant and the Registered Manager (or Responsible Individual). During this meeting, the Registered Manager (or Responsible Individual) must clearly identify timescales for their investigation.

It will be the responsibility of the Registered Manager (or Responsible Individual) to fully investigate the complaint, along with any supporting evidence. They will draw conclusions based on the evidence and will work to establish a resolution. A full report detailing how the complaint was investigated, and the resolutions/conclusions made, must be completed by the Registered Manager and sent to the complainant within the agreed timescales.

Stage 3 – If, for any reason, the complainant is not happy at the conclusion of Stage 2, they may request that the complaint be moved to Stage 3. For a complaint to be moved to Stage 3, the complainant must request this in writing to the Registered Manager (Katie Gibson-Cook) along with their reasons why they are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2. Upon receipt of this request, the agency will, within 28 days, assign an Independent Complaints Investigator to consider the complaint independently. The Complaints Investigator will hold an appropriate Social Work Qualification. The Complaints Investigator will consider all written evidence in relation to the complaint and will compile a report outlining their findings, along with any recommendations. The outcome of the investigation will be sent to the Registered Manager within 7 working days of the conclusion of the investigation in order to allow the Registered Manager to consider the information presented. The Registered Manager will make written contact with the complainant within 7 working days of receiving the Complaints Investigators report outlining their plan as to how to resolve the complaint.

To ensure all stage 3 investigations are independent, no relative, friend, colleague or close association of any person who is named within the complaint will be assigned as Complaints Investigator.

Stage 3 is the final stage in our complaints procedure. If, for any reason, the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they can contact our regulatory body, OFSTED.

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 123 1231



This policy is publicly available on our website www.theraparentfostering.co.uk to ensure that all parties have open access to it, namely:

- All stakeholders
- Foster Parents (and their children)
- Children who are looked after
- A parent/carer of a child who is looked after
- TheraParent Staff
- Anyone receiving a service from TheraParent
- Any purchaser of our services

TheraParent Fostering is committed to developing its' service in accordance with the needs of the children we care for and their foster parents. We therefore are open to constructive criticism and suggestions. Any such advice and guidance is considered supportive to the agency and would be welcome. Where possible, in adherence to the needs of the agency as a whole, we endeavour to embrace as many positive constructive suggestions as possible to continually develop our service.

Relevant Regulations/Standards:

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

Regulation 18 - Independent fostering agencies – representations and complaints

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards

STANDARD 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them

****Please see Complaints Flow Chart****

**** This policy has been read, understood and agreed by the Board of Directors and will be reviewed at least annually or when a change is required ****