

## **Policy Statement**

Chestnut Playgroup believes that children and parents/carers are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our playgroup and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the playgroup. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach to the appropriate member of staff. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns if parents/carers wish to exercise their right to make a formal complaint. They are informed of the procedure to do this and complaints are responded to in a timely way. The same procedures apply to agencies who may have a grievance or complaint. We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our playgroup to a satisfactory conclusion for all of the parties involved. We believe most complaints are made constructively and can be sorted out at an early stage. All complaints will be taken seriously, dealt with fairly and in a way that respects confidentiality.

## **Procedures**

All settings are required to keep a written record ('summary log') of any complaints that reach stage two and above and their outcome. This is to be made available to parents/carers as well as to Ofsted inspectors.

Under normal circumstances, the Pre-school Leader will be responsible for managing complaints. If a complaint is made against the Pre-school Leader, the Committee will conduct the investigation.

## ***Making A Complaint***

### **Stage 1**

- Any parent/carer who has a concern about any aspect of the playgroup's provision should first of all, talk over his or her concerns with the Pre-school Leader.
- Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage. The issue and how it was resolved is recorded in the child's file.

### **Stage 2**

- If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent/carer moves to this stage of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing to the Pre-school Leader and the Chair of the committee.
- For parents/carers who are not comfortable with making written complaints, the complaint may be completed with the Pre-school Leader and signed by the parent/carer.
- The playgroup stores written complaints from parents/carers in the child's personal file. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, the Pre-school Leader may wish to store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint.
- The playgroup will acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible – within three working days at least – and fully investigate the matter within 15 working days. If there is any delay, the playgroup will advise the parents/carers of this and offer an explanation.
- When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the Pre-school Leader or committee member meets with the parent/carer to discuss the outcome.
- The committee will formally inform parents/carers of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of making the complaint.
- When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record.
- The record will make clear whether the issue being raised relates to a concern about quality of the service or practice, or a complaint. For allegations relating to serious harm to a child caused by a member of staff or volunteer, the procedure for allegations against staff, volunteers or agency staff will be followed.

### **Stage 3**

- If the parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he or she requests a meeting with the Pre-school Leader and the chair of the committee. The parent/carer may have a friend or partner present if required and the Pre-school Leader should have the support of the Chair of the committee.
- An agreed written record of the discussion is made as well as any decision or action to take as a result. All of the parties present at the meeting sign the record and receive a copy of it.
- This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record.

### **Stage 4**

- If at the stage three meeting the parent/carer and playgroup cannot reach agreement, an external mediator is invited to help to settle the complaint. This person should be acceptable to both parties, listen to both sides and offer advice. A mediator has no legal powers but can help to define the problem, review the action so far and suggest further ways in which it might be resolved.
- Pre-school Learning volunteers or an Early Years Advisor are appropriate persons to be invited to act as mediators.
- The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. They can hold separate meetings with the playgroup personnel (Pre-school Leader and Chair of the committee) and the parent/carer, if this is decided to be helpful. The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice they give.

## Stage 5

- When the mediator has concluded their investigations, a final meeting between the parent/carer, the Pre-school Leader and the Chair of the committee is held. The purpose of this meeting is to reach a decision on the action to be taken to deal with the complaint. The mediator's advice is used to reach this conclusion. The mediator is present at the meeting if all parties think this will help a decision to be reached.
- A record of this meeting, including the decision on the action to be taken, is made. Everyone present at the meeting signs the record and receives a copy of it. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded.

### ***The role of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), the Local Safeguarding Children Board or local safeguarding partners and the Information Commissioner's Office***

- Parents/carers may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaints procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of the playgroup's registration requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted as the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are adhered to. Legislation requires settings to keep a record of complaints and disclose these to Ofsted at inspection, or if requested by Ofsted at any other time. The record of complaints is a summative record only.
- Ofsted can be contacted in writing via: Applications, Regulatory and Contact (ARC) Team, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. The number to call Ofsted with regard to a complaint is: **0300 123 1231**
- A record of complaints will be kept for at least 3 years. In all cases where a complaint is upheld a review will be undertaken by the owners/directors/trustees to look for ways to improve practice where it is required.
- These details are displayed on our playgroup's notice board.
- If a child appears to be at risk, our playgroup follows the procedures of the Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children Board or local safeguarding partners.
- The number to call the Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children Board is: **01480 373522**
- In these cases, both the parent/carer and playgroup are informed and the Pre-school Leader works with Ofsted or the Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children Board or local safeguarding partners to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.
- The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) can be contacted if you have made a complaint about the way your data is being handled and remain dissatisfied after raising your concern with us. For further information about how we handle your data, please refer to the Privacy Notice given to you when you registered your child at the playgroup. The ICO can be contacted at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or ico.org.uk

### ***Records***

- A record of complaints against our playgroup and/or the children and/or the adults working in the playgroup is kept for three years, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.
- The outcome of all complaints is recorded in the Summary Complaints Record which is available for parents/carers and Ofsted inspectors on request.
- In all cases where a complaint is upheld a review will be undertaken by the Committee to look for ways to improve practise where it is required.

This procedure is displayed on the Parent/Carer Notice Board.

### ***Agencies***

- If an individual from another agency wishes to make a formal complaint about a member of staff or any practice of the setting, it should be made in writing to the Pre-school Leader.
- The complaint is acknowledged in writing within 10 days of receiving it.
- The Pre-school Leader investigates the matter and meets with the individual to discuss the matter further within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- An agreement needs to be reached to resolve the matter.
- If agreement is not reached, the complainant may write to the Chair of the Committee, who acknowledges the complaint within 5 days and reports back within 14 days.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they are entitled to appeal and are referred to the Committee.

### **Further Guidance**

Complaint Investigation Record (Alliance Publication)

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Policy adopted: September 2011

Last reviewed: April 2024

Signed: .....

Name: Kerri Westlake

Position: Chair