# COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

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**Introduction**

The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to promote children, young people and vulnerable adults’ satisfaction with Cornerhouse and to identify areas where services can be improved. Cornerhouse believes that all children, young people and vulnerable adults should have access to a user friendly Complaints Procedure. Children, young people and vulnerable adults may find it difficult to express their worries, problems or challenge the way in which their concerns have been handled. This procedure is designed to enable them to make their views known. The starting point is that children, young people and vulnerable adults have:

* A right to be heard
* A right to complain
* A right to have their complaint looked into
* A right to have their complaint resolved as quickly as possible

**What is a Complaint?**

The definition of a complaint is any expression of unhappiness or dissatisfaction on the part of a child, young person or vulnerable adult. An adult may complain on behalf of a child or young person. The word ‘complaint’ need not be used but the sentiment is likely to be clear. It is often easier to resolve dissatisfaction at a very early stage, rather than let it escalate. Early resolution increases the chances of the child, young person or vulnerable adult continuing to use the service and left feeling happy with the service overall. A complaint may be identified in correspondence, by telephone or in face to face conversation and if there is any doubt as to whether the matter should be treated as a complaint then it should be referred to the relevant line manager.

**Who can complain and what can be complained about?**

Any child, young person or vulnerable adult who has received support from Cornerhouse can complain. Any person may complain on behalf of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, at any time, about any matter, if it is at the request of that child, young person or vulnerable adult. Children, young people and vulnerable adults are told how to complain if they are not happy with the support they have receive from Cornerhouse or with the way a Cornerhouse employee or volunteer has behaved.

**How will Cornerhouse respond to a complaint from children and young people**

Cornerhouse acknowledges it is difficult for children, young people and vulnerable adults to use complaints procedures and will ensure that:

* All Cornerhouse staff using or subject to the procedure understand their role in the procedure
* The procedure is easily understood and straightforward to use
* Information on how to make complaints is clear and widely publicised, available in different languages and formats when required
* The views of children, young people and vulnerable adults are listened to, taken seriously and treated in accordance with Cornerhouse’s Confidentiality and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
* Complaints are looked into as quickly and thoroughly as possible in a positive, courteous manner, and the child, young person or vulnerable adult kept informed of all stages of the complaint
* The name of the person the child, young person or vulnerable adult is dealing with about the complaint is always made known
* The child, young person or vulnerable adult, and the person against whom the complaint is made, are treated fairly
* All complaints received are reviewed annually and consequential improvements to service provision implemented

**Other Comments and Representations**

Any other person can make a comment or representation to any aspect of their experience of Cornerhouse and its services by writing to Cornerhouse’s Chief Executive Officer setting out the issue they wish to raise. Cornerhouse may wish to contact the correspondent to investigate the issue in more detail prior to providing any response.

Professional people who wish to raise matters on their own behalf should make direct contact with the Chief Executive Officer.

**Complaints Procedure**

There are three stages in the procedure - Stage 1 (Informal), Stage 2 (Formal), Stage 3 (Appeals).

**Stage 1**

All complaints will be first responded to under Stage 1 of the Procedure.

1. Children, young people and vulnerable adults may raise their concerns by:

* Telephoning the office
* Completing a feedback form by post or email

1. Children, young people and vulnerable adults may be assisted by a representative of their choice in making a complaint. In some circumstances the child, young person or vulnerable adult may proceed directly to the formal stage of the procedure.
2. The Chief Executive Officer must try to resolve a complaint first by informally listening to the child, young person or vulnerable adult’s concerns, explaining the procedures and providing necessary information as required. The Chief Executive Officer should:

* Explain the complaints procedure to the child, young person or vulnerable adult.
* Ensure that the child, young person or vulnerable adult is aware of his/her rights and the range of options and procedures available for resolving the complaint. This may include the need for an interpreter. In any interview the child, young person, vulnerable adult or the subject of the complaint may bring some one with them to support them.
* Within **ten working days** of receipt of the complaint agree the complaint with the child, young person or vulnerable adult and/or independent representative, record it in writing and provide a copy of the agreed complaint in a form appropriate to the age and understanding of the child, young person or vulnerable adult
* Notify in writing the subject of the complaint immediately upon agreeing the content of the complaint with the child, young person or vulnerable adult
* Allow the subject of the complaint to put her/his case, and treat the subject of the complaint fairly
* Address fairly and thoroughly the child, young person or vulnerable adult’s concerns and where possible resolve them to the child, young person or vulnerable adult’s satisfaction
* Advise the child, young person or vulnerable adult, the subject of the complaint of the outcome within **ten** **working days** of agreeing the complaint with the child, young person or vulnerable adult, providing the child, young person, vulnerable adult and/or independent representative with a copy in a form appropriate to the child, young person or vulnerable adult’s age and understanding
* Record the nature of the complaint and how it has been dealt with and lodge within the Complaints File.

1. If the child, young person or vulnerable adult is not satisfied with the outcome, within **14 working days**, s/he may ask the Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of Cornerhouse to initiate Stage 2 of the procedure.

**Stage 2**

1. When the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 of the Procedure, the Vice-Chair will immediately advise the subject of the complaint in writing that the complaint has moved to Stage 2.

2. The Vice-Chair will investigate the complaint and will examine the following areas:

* Carry out an investigation as quickly and effectively as possible
* Examine the file, interview or write to the child, young person or vulnerable adult or any other person to clarify matters or obtain more information
* Interview the subject of the complaint
* Produce a written report detailing in full the investigation and recommendations
* The Vice-Chair will respond to the complainant within **21 working days** of the start of Stage 2 of the procedure.
* The Vice-Chair will ensure all information supplied to the young person is in a form appropriate to the child, young person or vulnerable adult’s age and understanding

If the child, young person or vulnerable adult or the subject of the complaint is not happy with the outcome of the investigation of the complaint, they may appeal by writing to the Chair within **28 working days** of receiving the letter from the Vice-Chair.

***Stage 3 – the review***

The purpose of the review stage is to review the process and to consider whether the complaint procedure has been followed properly. The Chair of the Executive Committee will undertake the review and will:

* review all the information that has been provided
* consider the child, young person or vulnerable adult’s response to the outcome of the complaint.

If the Chair is not satisfied with the way the complaint has been investigated or the procedure has not been followed s/he may ask the Vice-Chair to re-investigate one or more aspects of the complaint.

The Chair will reply to the child, young person or vulnerable adult **within 14 working days of receipt of their request to move to stage 3.**

This marks the end of the complaints procedure and the complaint will be closed.

**Action taken when a complaint or part of it is upheld.**

Where part or all of a complaint is upheld the Chief Executive will

* identify what action needs to be taken to ensure that the circumstances which led to the complaint do not recur
* consider whether disciplinary is appropriate action. If such action is warranted Cornerhouse’s disciplinary procedure will apply.

The nature and outcome of all complaints will be reviewed annually and trends identified and addressed.

Approved by the Executive Committee: July 2016