



TIME OUT
fostering

valuing individual needs

SECTION SIXTEEN

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

2007

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1. STANDARD

Time Out Fostering believes everyone has a right to a good service. However there will be occasions when people feel they have been dealt with unfairly and want to make a complaint. This might be a foster carer, a child or young person in foster care, or someone else who is considered to have sufficient interest in the child's welfare.

Time Out Fostering aims to take all complaints seriously.

This procedure is written in line with the requirements of the 1989 Children's Act, Minimum Standards in Fostering and the Care Standards Act 2000 reg.

Foster carers, children, young people and staff will receive a copy of this policy. Children will receive some information which is aimed at their age and understanding. The local authority will also have a copy that can be issued to birth parents. All foster carers and children (if of satisfactory age and understanding) will be assisted to understand it if appropriate.

Children must be reassured that there will be no reprisals for making a complaint. Time Out Fostering staff not subject to the complaint will do everything possible to support the child making the complaint.

Any child complaining about Time Out Fostering's standard of care can consent to having their complaint forwarded to their social worker. Time Out Fostering will cooperate fully with any local authority investigations. Time Out Fostering will not prevent any complaint from being heard by the local authority or vice versa.

No person subject to a complaint will take part in its contemplation, unless it is considered appropriate by the registered person at the informal stage (Stage one) of this procedure.

Any complaint about registered persons shall be dealt with outside the agency. The registered people are defined in the Statement Of Purpose.

Any complaint that falls into the Time Out Fostering's Child Protection Policy should be dealt with via the Child Protection Procedure.

Time Out Fostering acknowledges the stress placed on anybody who has a complaint made against him or her. Time Out Fostering aims to offer appropriate consideration and support to this person.

This Procedure informs people who want to complain how to go about it and what should happen afterwards.

2. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PROCEDURE

Complaints Officer

Time Out Fostering has appointed a Complaints Officer who is aware of their roles and responsibilities. The Complaint's Officer will;

- Record the receiving of a complaint
- Clarify and explain the procedure to the parties involved
- Appoint any independent persons as required
- Initiate informal negotiations and /or investigation /interview of parties involved where needed
- Record the outcomes at each stage of the procedure

Independent Person

If a complaint remains unresolved by informal discussion an Independent Person will be appointed. This will be a person who receives no benefit in any way whatsoever from Time Out Fostering's day to day activities.

The appointed Independent Person will have access to all the information about the complaint, and will interview all relevant people involved in the complaint. The Independent Person will write a report for Time Out Fostering.

3. INFORMAL RESOLUTION (STAGE ONE)

Time Out Fostering provides 24 hour telephone support for all foster carers, it is expected that any complaints are registered with a Time Out Fostering member of staff as soon as possible.

Initially complaints will be dealt with in an informal way. It is hoped that most disputes can be resolved by way of direct verbal negotiation with an appropriate member of Time Out staff.

Foster carers would be advised to seek assistance to clarify the complaint, maybe from another foster carer or support group.

Foster carers are then advised to speak to their supervising social worker or their manager, in order to resolve the matter

Fostered children or a young person may wish/need to find an adult who can assist them with the complaint. The age and understanding of the child will be taken into account. Time Out Fostering will help to find a suitable Independent advocate.

All other people should contact the person who has been dealing with them or the complaint's officer and express their concerns.

If complainants prefer, any Time Out Fostering member of staff should be open to helping to resolve an issue. If at the end of this the complaint remains unresolved the next stage is a formal complaint.

4. FORMAL COMPLAINT (STAGE TWO)

The formal stage involves writing a report about the complaint and then ensuring that Time Out Fostering receives it. The complainant's officer should issue an acknowledgement of receipt. If the complainant is a child or young person they should be assisted to write their complaint by an independent person.

The person who wishes to make the complaint should do the following;

1. Gather all the information necessary to give a full picture on the complaint.
2. Request the viewing of their file if necessary (Time Out Fostering has a procedure on how to request this).
3. Write a full report about the complaint. This can be done alone or with assistance. The report should be set out as follows;
 - What the complaint is about
 - The date and circumstances of the problem
 - Who said/did what and when
 - Attached statements from other people in their own words
 - Why they feel aggrieved
 - What they would like Time Out Fostering to do about the complaint
4. Try to separate what actually happened from what they think happened, say if they are unsure.
5. Type the report if possible.

5. PROCEDURE

1. The complaints officer will read the complaint report and respond in writing within two weeks. The response will outline how the complaint will be dealt with.
2. The complaints officer will decide who should deal with the complaint. Sometimes it may be an issue to do with a child placed and Time Out Fostering will therefore forward the complaint to the local authority. The child concerned will also have to be informed about the complaints procedure, taking into account their age and understanding.
3. The complaints officer will activate the time limits once eligibility is established.
4. The complaints officer will inform the person about whom the complaint has been made as long as it is deemed that no one will be put at risk by this action.
5. The complaint's officer will appoint an independent person to investigate the complaint.
6. The complaint's officer will record all decisions and actions up to this point.
7. The complaints officer will assist in the appointment of an independent person to support the child if they are involved in the complaint
8. The independent investigating officer will read the case notes, and then where appropriate interview the person complaining and anyone else involved.
9. The interview (8) will be informal but the matter will be taken seriously. The complainant should prepare for the interview.
10. Any information or names and addresses of people who may have some information on the complaint should be given to the investigating officer.
11. Within six weeks of the date of the first report being received by Time Out Fostering the independent investigating officer will produce a report for Time Out Fostering, this will be about their view of the complaint.
12. If the report is delayed, the investigating officer must inform the person who is complaining and explain why.
13. The manager who is responsible for the placement concerned will read and consider the investigating officers report.
14. Within 28 days of receiving the report the manager will respond to the complainant in writing.
15. This response will inform the complainant of Time Out Fostering's response and any action to be taken by the agency as a result of the complaint

6. PROCEDURE FOR UNSATISFIED COMPLAINANTS (STAGE THREE)

1. The complainant has 28 days from receiving the response to appeal against the way the complaint has been handled.
2. The complainant must be clear about why they are dissatisfied.
3. The complainant can appeal if they are dissatisfied with;
 - The way the investigation was carried out
 - The way the time scales were adhered to
 - The report and it's recommendations
 - The way the recommendations have been carried out
4. The complainant must then request a panel meeting to investigate the appeal.
5. The panel will be made up of people uninvolved in the case, two directors and an independent person.
6. The panel will convene within 28 days of receiving the appeal.
7. The panel will consider all information, both spoken and written that the complainant and Time Out Fostering wish to present.
8. The complainant is encouraged to attend the meeting and can bring a person to support them and or speak on their behalf.
9. The panel will discuss the information and reach a decision about the complaint within 48 hours. The reasons and decision will then be clearly documented.
10. The recommendation will be sent to Time Out Fostering, the complainant, any independent people involved and any other interested parties.
11. If the complainant is still not satisfied they can take their complaint to Ofsted Tel; 08456 404040.
12. If the complaint is about a director or registered manager of Time Out Fostering then it should be made directly to Ofsted.
13. Copies of all complaints and their outcomes will be kept on file and will be made available to Ofsted on request.

7. COMPLAINTS ABOUT A REGISTERED PERSON

The Directors of Time Out Fostering are Joan Brookes and Jeremy Cross. The Registered Provider is Jeremy Cross and the Registered Manager is Alison Young.

If the complaint is about a director or registered person of Time Out Fostering then it should be made directly to the Ofsted;

- Ofsted Tel 08456 404040