

# Complaints Policy

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## 1 Introduction

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This policy describes Mary's formal Complaints Procedure. Mary's welcomes all comments on its services, regardless of whether they are positive or negative. Mary's also requests feedback from all users of our services via regular evaluations and questionnaires.

In the first instance, if a young person, parent or a member of the public using Mary's services has a complaint about some aspect of the provision, or about the conduct of an individual member of staff, they are encouraged to speak directly to the member of staff or the Youth Manager. Stage One of the procedure will formally come into operation if a satisfactory resolution cannot be found. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be found, then Stage One of the procedure will formally come into operation. All complaints will be logged so that issues can be reviewed as part of Mary's commitment to maintain best practice.

Please note that if the complaint has Safeguarding or Child Protection implications, Mary's Designated Child Protection Officer will be informed and will ensure that the local Social Services department is contacted, according to the procedure set out in Mary's *Safeguarding Policy*. If any party involved in the complaint has good reason to believe that a criminal offence has been committed, then the police will be contacted. If a Social Services authority or the Police decide to investigate a situation this may postpone or supersede investigation by Mary's.

## 2 Complaints Process and Procedures

### 2.1 Stage One – formal complaint to a Mary's Manager

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If informal discussions of a complaint or problem have not produced a satisfactory resolution to the situation, young person, parents or client should put their complaint in writing to a manager or senior youth worker. This manager will be responsible for managing the complaint and communicating with the CEO of Mary's. Relevant names, dates, evidence and any other important information on the nature of the complaint should be included.

If a complaint is made about one of the Managers the CEO will conduct the investigation in accordance with Stage 1 (see below).

- 2.1.1 Mary's will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing as soon as possible (or within five working days).
- 2.1.2 The Department Manager (or CEO) may arrange to meet the relevant individuals, such as members of staff, to discuss the complaint and Mary's response to it. The Manager will judge if it is best for all parties to meet together or if individual meetings are more appropriate.
- 2.1.3 A formal record of all meetings will be taken and made available for those concerned should they wish to see them.
- 2.1.4 The manager (or CEO) will produce a written response to the complainant within 15 working days. The Manager may wish to meet with the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter before confirming the outcome in writing.
- 2.1.5 Either party may need to consider consulting an external mediator who is acceptable to both parties and will offer support and advice. Any mediator must ensure discussions are kept confidential.
- 2.1.6 The written response should include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, it should include what action Mary's will take to resolve the complaint.
- 2.1.7 Stage 1 should be completed within 20 working days. If there is any delay, Mary's will advise the complainant of this and offer an explanation in writing and a revised completion date.
- 2.1.8 Mary's will not pay financial compensation as a response to complaints, although it may spend money on a relevant purpose (e.g. purchasing new equipment).

## 2.2 Stage Two – Consideration by the CEO and Mary's Trustees

If at the conclusion of the Stage 1 process the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response they have received, Stage 2 of the complaints procedure will be followed.

- 2.2.1 The original complaint along with Mary's response will be passed to the CEO and the Mary's Trustees, who will form a complaint committee formed of the CEO and a minimum of two Trustees. If the CEO investigated the original complaint, the committee should be formed of a minimum of three Trustees and the CEO should not be included in the committee.
- 2.2.2 The committee will consider the complaint on the basis of the written evidence, and usually also set up a hearing and hear both parties, providing written advance notice of this hearing. The aim of this hearing should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the complainant and Mary's.
- 2.2.3 The hearing should allow for:
  - The complainant to explain their complaint and the Manager or CEO who originally investigated the complaint to explain the reasons for his or her decision in the original handling of the complaint
  - The complainant to question the Manager or CEO who originally investigated the complaint
  - The committee to question both the complainant and the Manager or CEO

- Any party to have the right to bring witnesses and all parties having the right to question all witnesses
- Final statement by the complainant and the Manager or CEO

At the end of the hearing the committee will issue a written statement to both the complainant and the Manager or CEO (who originally investigated the complaint) either upholding or not upholding the complaint, or upholding some parts and not others. If relevant, this finding should also include what Mary's will do to resolve the complaint, and any changes Mary's will make to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

2.2.4 As in section 2.1.8 above, Mary's will not pay financial compensation as a response to complaints, although it may spend money on a relevant purpose (e.g. purchasing new equipment).

2.2.5 Stage 2 should be completed within 20 working days from receiving the appeal. If there is any delay, Mary's will advise the complainant of this and offer an explanation in writing and a revised completion date.

## 2.3 Complaints about the CEO

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If a complaint is made wholly or mainly about the CEO then the Board of Trustees will consider the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the procedure described above – in this case, the complaint committee should be formed of a minimum of three Trustees and the CEO should not be included in the committee.

However, before Stage 2 is instigated the Trustees will invite the CEO to respond to the complaint in writing within 10 working days. The Trustees will send a copy of the CEO's response to the complainant and they will be asked to indicate within 5 days of receipt of the response whether they are satisfied with the response. If they are not satisfied with the response Stage 2 should commence as described above.

## 2.4 Making a Complaint to Islington Trading Standards

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Anyone can, at any time, submit a complaint to trading standards (Islington). They will consider and investigate all complaints received that are in breach of the relevant statutory requirements.

### **Trading Standards Service**

Public Protection Division, Islington Council, 222 Upper Street, London N1 1XR

Email: [trading.standards@islington.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@islington.gov.uk)

## 2.5 Monitoring and Review

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The Trustees review the complaints procedure bi-annually, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. All complaints received from parents and service users and how they were resolved are logged by Managers or the CEO. Trustees examine this log on an annual basis.

The policy is made available to parents and other service users, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

### 3 Changes, Reviews and Approvals for this Policy

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Date	Changes, Reviews and Approvals	Who By
21/07/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Updated contact names</li><li>• Removed reference to childcare (for example: making complaints to Ofsted)</li><li>• Formatting and readability changes.</li></ul>	Aston Wood
26/07/2023	Approval	Trustees