



## **COMPLIMENTS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE**

### **1. ABOUT THE POLICY**

The aim of this policy is to provide direction and guidance to staff around ensuring complaints are dealt with in a timely, consistent and effective way that ensures the approach taken is fair and proportionate and sensitive to both the complainant and staff.

Islington Play Association (IPA) strives to provide a quality service offer. Comments, compliments, and complaints are valuable and acknowledged as a way to help IPA identify areas for improvement. We therefore value any feedback, both verbal and written, that will enable us to improve the overall quality of our services.

Compliments are positive experiences of our services and are highly valued as an acknowledgement of the work our staff provide. Compliments can be received verbally, and in written formats such as letters and cards and online feedback, e.g., websites and social media posts. Compliments are recorded and fed back to relevant individuals, teams or trustees.

We encourage concerns to be raised with us as early as possible, before they become a complaint. This will allow us to make early interventions and improvements, if appropriate. However, we acknowledge it is not always possible to achieve this.

Complaints are a formal way to resolve an issue after initial responses to concerns have been unsuccessful. Complaints, verbal and written, are treated seriously and are dealt with in a timely and effective manner that ensures complete fairness for both staff and the complainant. The complaints procedure is carried out as detailed in this policy.

Complainants have the right to confidentiality, but anonymous complaints cannot usually be investigated.

While IPA does not condone or tolerate abusive or offensive language, we recognise that complainants or potential complainants may be in a heightened emotional state or, as an individual, have different views of what constitutes offensive language. If such cases arise, the complainant or potential complainant would be asked to moderate their language. Any abusive or offensive comments are not classed as complaints and are deemed unacceptable.

In line with compliments, complaints should be reported to trustees.

### **2. AIMS AND SCOPE**

This policy aims to set out how we manage, respond to and resolve concerns and complaints effectively. This is achieved through a procedure which:

- is easily accessible to complainants
- provides a defined system for raising concerns and making complaints about any aspect of IPA's services
- is a quick and open process with designated timescales and a commitment to keep the complainant informed of the progress of the investigation
- is fair to staff and complainant
- provides support for the complainant to make the complaint
- provides support for staff members to respond to the issues raised in the complaint

- maintains the confidentiality of the child/young person/young adult, complainant and staff member(s)
- provides the opportunity to learn from the concern/complaint to improve services

### **3. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Board of Trustees**

Trustees are responsible for providing an escalation route for the complaints process when the complaint involves the CEO, or when undertaking an appeal of the outcome which has been given by the CEO. Trustees will also consider if any strategic risks emerge from complaints.

The Board is also responsible for:

- receiving a quarterly report on all complaints received
- scrutinising the number and nature of complaints received for any trends or potential strategic risk

#### **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

The CEO is responsible for the overall management of complaints, delegation of authority to directors or managers, overseeing further investigation if the complaint is not resolved, and for investigating a complaint against a director. The CEO must be notified of all complaints.

#### **Directors**

Directors are responsible for:

- receiving all complaints relating to teams for which they are responsible and reporting to the board.
- inputting the concern/complaint details onto the Concerns & Complaints Log and updating the CEO
- acting as or allocating an Investigating Officer
- overseeing the investigation and authorising remedial action if appropriate in the prepared final response letter to the complainant
- ensuring a resolution or referral to the appropriate regulatory body
- disseminating learning as appropriate to relevant staff
- overseeing implementation of action plans resulting from investigations

#### **Managers**

Managers are responsible for:

- ensuring that all concerns or complaints are taken seriously
- ensuring the complaints procedure is followed, including recording and reporting.
- when allocated, undertaking the role of Investigator.

#### **Investigator**

- The Investigator is a member of staff who is asked, usually by a Director or the CEO, to take responsibility for ensuring the complaints procedure is followed within the timeframes indicated.
- receiving and securely filing all communication in the relevant complaint folder
- keeping the relevant Director updated on the progress of the investigation including any delays to the timeframes set out within this policy.

#### **All Staff**

Staff are responsible for:

- embracing complaints as an opportunity to reflect and learn from the experience, despite any difficult feelings they can evoke.
- supporting with the investigation of complaints within the agreed timescales as requested, resolving minor concerns immediately and informally where appropriate to do so, recording these and escalating where appropriate.

### Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years from the approval date and earlier if there are changes in legislation or in response to key learning from internal monitoring / investigations, whichever is the sooner.

## 4. Policy

### Definition and Principles

<b>Complaint</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints are comments in which someone external to IPA states they feel that something is unsatisfactory about the organisation, the service that they have received or behaviour or events that they have witnessed and which they or the organisation considers require a response.</li> <li>• Complaints may be written (including electronic such as email or text) but may also be raised verbally.</li> <li>• The only distinction between a verbal and written complaint is the method by which it is made. Whether it is made in writing or verbally doesn't determine the status of a complaint.</li> </ul>
<b>Compliment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A compliment is a statement made by someone external to the organisation expressing a positive opinion or judgement about a service, project or event.</li> <li>• A compliment should be recorded and shared with the relevant Director.</li> </ul>
<b>Concern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A concern is a statement made by someone external to the organisation expressing a negative opinion or judgement about a service, project or event.</li> <li>• A concern can usually be dealt with through discussion with the complainant (written or verbal). The person may preface their concern with words such as: "I don't want to make a formal complaint but..." or "I don't want to make a fuss but want to let you know that...". Often dealing with a concern quickly and properly, by talking to the complainant, avoids escalation to a complaint. For example, it might be about explaining the ethos of adventure play to a parent in more detail.</li> <li>• However, some concerns may be potential complaints. Whether or not a concern results in a complaint, internal review and learning and follow up with the person raising it may still be appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A suggestion is a comment suggesting improvements in something the organisation does.</li> <li>• It may be made verbally or in writing (including anonymously).</li> <li>• Suggestions made verbally should be received positively by the member of staff. All suggestions should be passed to the relevant Director.</li> </ul>

## **What to do if you believe the policy has been breached**

If you believe this policy has been breached, you should report this to the relevant Director who will investigate and take action accordingly. Breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the individual.

### **5. Who can make a complaint**

Any person (including children, young people/adults) can make a complaint to a member of staff if they are dissatisfied with any element of IPA's services.

In the case of a child, a suitable representative would normally be a parent, guardian or someone who is authorised by the local authority/voluntary organisation in the case of children in care.

### **6. Complaints process**

The aim of this process, detailed below and illustrated at Appendix 1, is to provide instructions on how to manage a concern or complaint from receipt through to resolution. All staff should deal with complaints promptly, and where appropriate to do so, resolve the complaint as soon as possible. Front line staff should be empowered to resolve minor concerns immediately and informally where appropriate to do so.

Complaints should be dealt with fairly both towards the complainant and to any member of staff involved. The Investigator will notify staff members and their manager if a complaint has been received identifying them individually within the complaint. Where appropriate, or required, they will be provided with an opportunity to respond.

#### **6.1. Making a complaint**

A concern or complaint should be made as soon as possible but within a year of the event or becoming aware of the issue. This is because events can become more difficult to investigate the more time as passed after the event. Complaints received outside of these timescales may still be investigated if there is a compelling reason the complaint could not be made earlier and only if it is still possible to investigate what happened.

Concerns and complaints may be initiated with any staff by parents, children or young people or other members of the public. Every concern/complaint needs to be dealt with sensitively and seen as an opportunity to improve the service. These can be received by staff verbally or in writing.

On the receipt of a concern, the relevant Director should be informed with the information needed to complete the Concerns Record Sheet.

#### **6.2. Receiving a Complaint**

Complaints may be raised initially with front line staff. When receiving the complaint, the staff member should:

- try to help the complainant feel relaxed and reassure them that their complaint will be dealt with fairly, sympathetically and professionally
- offer a private environment to continue the discussion
- thank them for bringing the matter to their attention/raising a complaint
- listen carefully in order to understand the nature of their complaint
- inform the complainant that you, as a member of staff, will make a record of the discussion

- avoid being defensive; listening is key
- hold back from offering an explanation at this stage as the complaint has yet to be investigated
- inform the complainant that a member of staff will contact them to discuss their complaint further
- inform a Director if the complaint relates to their Line Manager

### **6.3. Acknowledging a complaint**

A nominated person (the Investigator) should be appointed by the relevant Director to investigate the complaint immediately on receipt of the complaint.

All complainants should be telephoned by the Investigator to acknowledge receipt of their complaint and an acknowledgement letter sent within 3 working days. They should also be given the option to receive feedback on the outcome of the investigation by phone or a meeting as well as by letter.

### **6.4. Investigating a complaint**

The Investigator must be a member of staff that is not involved in the complaint.

The complaint investigation should be handled in a manner which acknowledges that being subject to a complaint can be a stressful and anxious time for staff.

All findings should be fully documented on the Investigation Template as well as any communication with the complainant, on the Complaints Record Sheet.

## **7. Resolving of complaints**

Once the investigation has been completed the Investigator will share their findings and report with the relevant Director and discuss the recommendations. The Investigator will draft a letter to the complainant to notify them of the outcomes and proposed actions, which will be signed off by the relevant Director.

If at the acknowledgement stage the complainant confirmed they would also like to receive feedback via a phone call or meeting, this would also take place at this stage. The letter should be sent within 28 working days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible a holding letter should be sent detailing the progress made and the reasons for the delay explained.

The relevant Director will then feed back to the manager or staff member to whom the complaint relates, which might include sharing the investigation report, if appropriate, or summarising the findings and recommendations. Under the oversight of the relevant Director, appropriate action plans following the complaint should be completed and any learning disseminated to relevant staff.

The detail of the complaint, without personal details, should be reported to the board at its next meeting.

## **8. Unresolved complaints**

Complainants must raise any concerns regarding the outcome of the investigation with the CEO or, if the complaint was about the CEO, the Board of Trustees within 28 working days of receipt of the final response letter.

If the complainant is still not happy with the outcome, they will be given the details of the relevant organisation to contact.

For complaints relating to nursery provision the following organisation's details should be given:

Ofsted

email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or tel: 0300 123 4666

For complaints relating to IPA as an organisation:

Charity Commission

<https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/raising-concerns/>

For complaints relating to data breaches the following organisation's details should be given:

Information Commissioner's Office

Tel: 0303 123 113

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

## APPENDIX 1: CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS PROCESS FLOW CHART

