

St. Joseph's Specialist Trust
Amlets Lane, Cranleigh
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Supported Living Complaints Policy



Christ in our Lives
'No limits ... just possibilities'

New Policy: December 2025
Cycle: Annual
Version: 1.0

Introduction and Overview

This policy is applicable to St Joseph's Specialist Trust which comprises of St Joseph's specialist school, college, registered children's home and Springvale supported living, together "St Joseph's Trust". This policy is for the purpose of Adult Supported Living (Springvale).

St Joseph's Trust is required by law to have a procedure in place to deal with complaints relating to the Trust and believes it is good practice for an employer to have a clear and fair complaints policy for all employees so extends this across the entirety of St Joseph's Trust. The law requires that this procedure must be publicised. In this policy the Trustees may devolve their responsibility with regard to complaints to the Governors

St Joseph's Trust welcomes constructive complaints, St Joseph's Trust learns from them and uses them to improve their service. St Joseph's Trust is always willing to listen and will do its utmost to resolve any concerns about adult supported living or staff. If St Joseph's Trust is unable to resolve the complaint, it will explain how to take the complaint further. St Joseph's Trust will not discriminate or treat anyone any differently because they wish to complain.

The vast majority of complaints and concerns can be resolved informally.

A complaint can be brought by a parent of an adult at Springvale, a person who has been provided with a service or a facility at St Joseph's Trust or any third party who may have cause to complain about St Joseph's Trust, including a placing authority. The procedure refers to this person as a complainant.

St Joseph's Trust will provide this policy on request to other agencies, professionals, relatives and friends, who wish to make a complaint on behalf of an adult registered at St Joseph's Trust. The complainant must feel able to raise concerns and complaints with members of staff without formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. A complainant may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further. A concern or unresolved problem becomes a complaint when the complainant asserts that St Joseph's Trust has acted wrongly in some significant decision, action or failure to take action. A complaint can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

The Executive Principal at St Joseph's Trust has ultimate responsibility for the operation and management of the complaints procedure although she may delegate aspects of this to other members of staff.

Special Circumstances

Any complaint or other notice that suggests that a vulnerable adult is at risk of significant harm through abuse or neglect – including physical, emotional, sexual, financial or organisational abuse – may be referred immediately to the Local Authority Adult Safeguarding Team in accordance with Care Act 2014. This referral may be made without prior notice to the individual or others involved if doing so increases the level of risk. If the local authority decides to undertake a Section 42 Safeguarding Enquiry, this may take precedence over, postpone, or replace and internal investigation by the organisations Responsible Individual, Registered manager, Principal Executive or Trustees. St Joseph's Trust with the safeguarding process follow the direction of the local authority.

Other Solutions to Complaints

Where a matter is being addressed through a legal appeal it will not be pursued as a formal complaint. Matters such as whistleblowing, staff grievance & disciplinary issues may be covered by separate policies. Where a member of staff has a complaint, these are normally managed through the Grievance Procedure. However, where a staff complaint is about a matter that does not concern their employment, this policy will be used.

Dealing with concerns informally

The complainant will be given an opportunity to discuss their concern with the appropriate member of staff. An appointment may need to be made. The Complainant will be given the contact details of the person at St Joseph's Trust whom they should contact. The complainant's contact details will be taken. The complainant may bring a friend to any discussion. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that the complainant is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed. This stage will be completed speedily and concluded in writing with appropriate detail. Where no satisfactory solution has been found, the complainant will be informed that s/he will need to consider whether to make a formal complaint to the Registered Manager, Responsible Individual or Executive Principal. To assist in this process a complaint form will be provided (see Appendix A).

Stage 1 – Referral to the Executive Principal for investigation

The Registered manager, Responsible Individual or Executive Principal will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 working days. The Registered Manager, Responsible Individual or Executive Principal will consider providing an opportunity to meet with the complainant to supplement any information previously provided. If the complaint is against a member of staff, the Registered Manager, Responsible Individual or Executive Principal will talk to the staff member against whom the complaint has been made. If necessary, the Registered manager, Responsible Individual or Executive Principal will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved or if appropriate appoint an investigating officer to do this on their behalf.

The Registered manager, Responsible Individual, Executive Principal or Investigating Officer will keep reasonable written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Registered Manager, Responsible Individual or Executive Principal will produce a written response to the complainant, they may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter before confirming the outcome in writing.

The written response will include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, it will include what action St Joseph's Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

Stage 1 will be completed in 15 working days. However, it is recognised that where the case is complex, it may prove difficult to meet this timetable. In such cases, the Registered Manager, Responsible Individual or Executive Principal will write to the complainant giving a revised target date. St Joseph's Trust will not pay financial compensation as a response to complaints, though may spend money on a relevant purpose (e.g. paying a fee for a repeat examination) in resolution of a complaint.

The formal stage 1 response will also advise the complainant that if s/he is not satisfied with the response and wishes to take the matter further, s/he will write to the Chair of the

Board of Trustees within 15 working days of receiving the outcome letter. The outcome letter will set out the name of the Chair of the Trustees and the address to which the complainant can send the letter. In the case of complaints relating to Adult Supported Living, the Chair of Trustees.

Complaints against the Registered manager or Responsible Individual:

If the complaint is wholly about the Registered Manager or Responsible Individual then this would be escalated to the Executive Principal to investigate as they will have organisational authority and not implicated in the complaint. The investigation may be investigated by the Executive Principal or Investigating Officer. The Executive Principal or Investigating Officer will invite the Registered manager or Responsible Individual to respond to the complaint in writing within 10 working days. The Executive Principal or Investigating Officer will send a copy of the Registered Manager or Responsible Individuals response to the complainant. They will be asked within 5 working days of receipt whether s/he is satisfied with the response. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response stage 2 will be commenced as described in paragraph 6 below.

If the complaint relates to abuse or neglect then the local authority would need to be notified. The Head of Safeguarding at St Joseph's Trust would be required to make a Section 42 Referral to the local authority Safeguarding Adults Team.

If an allegation against the Registered Manager or Responsible Individual has been made that involves abuse, neglect or serious misconduct then a CQC notification must be made.

Complaints against the Executive Principal.

If the complaint is wholly or mainly about the Executive Principal, Board of Trustees consider the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the procedure described below. However, before Stage 2 is instigated the Chair of Trustees will invite the Executive Principal to respond to the complaint in writing within 10 working days. The Chair will send a copy of the Executive Principal's response to the complainant who will be asked to indicate within 5 working days of receipt of the response whether s/he is satisfied with the response. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response stage 2 will commence as described in paragraph 6 below.

Stage 2 – Consideration by the Board of Trustees (or delegated Governing Body)

If the complainant decides to take the matter further, the Chair of the Trustees will write to the complainant to acknowledge the complaint within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint, A copy of the acknowledgement and the complaints form will be sent to the Executive Principal and the Clerk to the Trustees & Governors. (A standard letter is attached to this document which the Chair may wish to use).

Investigating the complaint – If the complaint has been investigated at Stage 1, the result of the investigation must be made available to the Clerk/Chair by the Executive Principal. However, where the complaint is against the Executive Principal and the complaint is referred to Stage 2, the relevant Chair of the Trustees or Governing Body must decide how the complaint will be investigated. Where the facts of the complaint are clearly established, it is unlikely for the Chair to order an investigation. The matter may instead be escalated directly to the Complaints Appeal Panel ("CAP").

The relevant Chair will establish a CAP drawing on three Trustees and/or Governors with no prior, direct involvement with the complaint. In deciding the make-up of the CAP, where possible the Chair will try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of CAP members sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. Where all (or a majority of Trustees and Governors) are aware of the substance of a complaint before the final stage has been completed, the Trustee Board or Governing Body may choose to

arrange for the panel hearing the complaint to be made up entirely (or include a number) of independent panel members. In this case, independent panel members may be drawn from another school's Trustees or Governing Boards or from specialist advisors or experts.

The Executive Principal will not serve on the CAP. If the Chair has had any prior involvement in the complaint, then the Chair must not sit on the CAP.

The CAP will consider the complaint on the basis of the written evidence and set up a hearing within 30 working days to hear both parties. The CAP will reconsider the issues raised in the original complaint and not confine themselves to consideration of procedural issues.

The Chair of the CAP will take a decision at the beginning of Stage 2 on whether to seek the services of a Clerk to:

- Deal with the administration of the procedure;
- Provide independent advice on procedure and evidence;
- Ensure that the relevant facts are established;
- Minute the meeting; and
- Draft the decision letter.

The Clerk/Chair of the CAP will write to the complainant to explain how the review will be conducted. The letter will be copied to the Executive Principal.

The Clerk/Chair of the CAP will confirm the date of the meeting with the other Trustees/Governors

The complainant and Executive Principal will be invited to attend the meeting. The date and time of the meeting will be convenient to the complainant and Executive Principal, within reason. The notification will inform the complainant of his/her right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/representative. It will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and of the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the committee.

The Executive Principal will also be invited to prepare a written report for the CAP in response to the complaint.

All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint will be circulated to the CAP; the complainant and the Executive Principal in advance of the meeting.

If the Executive Principal and/or the complainant wish to call witnesses, the agreement of the Chair of the CAP will be obtained in advance of the meeting.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the CAP to ensure that the meeting is properly conducted. However, the proceedings will be as informal as possible.

The aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, at the end of the meeting the CAP will need to issue a finding in writing either upholding or not upholding the complaint or upholding some parts and not others.

If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, the meeting may be adjourned so that the other side has time to respond to the new evidence. Late evidence of witnesses will not be accepted unless there is a bona fide reason for the delay agreed by both parties.

The meeting will allow for:

- The complainant to explain his or her complaint and the Executive Principal to explain the reasons for his or her decision;
- The Executive Principal to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant to question the Executive Principal;

- The CAP to have an opportunity to question both the complainant and the Executive Principal;

- Any party to have the right to bring witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair of CAP) and all parties having the right to question all the witnesses; and

- A final statement by the Executive Principal and complainant.

The Chair of the CAP will explain to the complainant and the Executive Principal that the CAP will consider its decision, and a written response will be sent to both parties as soon as possible. The complainant, Executive Principal and any witnesses will then leave.

The CAP will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint. Where appropriate the CAP can decide on the action to be taken to resolve the complaint and/or suggest recommended changes to St Joseph's Trust system or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

As in Section 5 above, the CAP will not pay financial compensation as a response to a complaint, though may spend money on an appropriate purpose.

The Clerk/Chair of CAP will send a written statement outlining the decision with reasons to both the complainant and the Executive Principal.

Stage 2 will be completed in 15 working days. However, it is recognised that this timetable may prove challenging where complaints are complex. In such cases, the CAP chair will write to the complainant and Executive Principal giving a revised target date.

Vexatious, Serial & Persistent or Unreasonable Complaints

There will be occasions when despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Trustees or Governing Body can inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Relevant organisations related to the policy where staff, tenants, families/advocates and professionals can refer to:

Local authority Adult Safeguarding Team – 0300 200 1005

The Care Quality Commission – 03000 616161

The Police – 999

Advocacy Services (Surrey) – 01483 310 500

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) – 0300 061 0614 10am – 1pm

Appendix A – St Joseph’s Complaint Form (for Stage 1 complaints)

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Executive Principal. {If your complaint is against the Executive Principal you will need to send the form to the Chair of the Trustees}

Your Name:

Address:

Post Code:

Telephone Number (Home):

Telephone Number (Day):

Telephone Number (Mobile):

Name of Tenant if Complainant is a Parent/Carer:

What is your complaint about and what would you like the Executive Principal to do?

When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the Registered Manager/Responsible Individual?

What was the result of the discussion?

Signed.....Date.....

Date Policy Reviewed

| Date | Changes | Reviewed by | Version |
|---------------|--|---|---------|
| December 2025 | Extracted from existing Trust policy to create adult supported living standalone policy in line with guidance from Debbie Fox , CQC Inspector received | Angela Hammond Lizzie Hurst Liz Sanders | 1.0 |
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