

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Version 1.0 - reviewed and updated as required

Project West aims to provide children, families, referrers and professionals with a safe, respectful and high-quality service. We welcome feedback and treat complaints as an opportunity to put matters right, learn and improve.

Our commitment: Complaints will be taken seriously, handled fairly and as promptly as possible. A person will not be disadvantaged or treated less favourably because they have raised a concern or complaint in good faith.

1. Scope

This procedure applies to complaints about Project West services, staff, communication, administration and whether Project West has followed its published procedures. It may be used by a child or young person, parent, family member, referrer, professional or representative.

A complaint may be made on someone else's behalf where they have agreed, where they lack capacity to complain personally, or where this is otherwise lawful and appropriate. We may ask for evidence of authority to act.

2. Matters requiring another route

- Immediate danger or a child at immediate risk: call 999.
- A safeguarding concern arising during or in connection with a Project West service will be managed under safeguarding procedures and may be referred to Children's Social Care, the Police or another statutory body without waiting for the complaint process to finish.
- Concerns about the accuracy of an objective observation report may be considered where a factual error is identified. Project West will not alter a professional record simply because a party disagrees with an observed account. Disputed evidence or conclusions in ongoing proceedings should be raised with the court or instructing professional.
- Allegations about staff conduct may also require a safeguarding, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), disciplinary or professional process. Confidential employment information and details of any disciplinary action will not be disclosed to the complainant.
- Data protection concerns may also be raised with the Information Commissioner's Office after Project West has had an opportunity to respond.

3. Help to make a complaint

We will make reasonable adjustments and provide information in an accessible format where possible. A child or adult may ask a trusted person, advocate, solicitor or professional to help. Please tell us about any communication, language or accessibility needs.

4. Informal resolution

Many concerns can be resolved quickly. If you feel able, speak to the member of staff working with you or ask to speak to the Coordinator or Manager. We will listen, clarify the issue and try to agree a practical resolution. You do not have to use the informal route before making a formal complaint.

5. How to make a formal complaint

Send the complaint in writing, marked "Private and Confidential - Complaint", using any of the following:

- Email: info@projectwest.co.uk
- Post: Complaints Officer, Project West Assessment & Contact Services, 27 Sandringham Road, Northolt, Middlesex UB5 5HN
- A Project West complaint form, if preferred. A letter or email is equally acceptable.

Please include your name and contact details; the child or service involved (where appropriate); what happened and when; who was involved; any relevant documents; what outcome you are seeking; and any support or reasonable adjustment required. Do not send court documents or other confidential case material to NACCC.

6. Stage 1 - investigation

1. Project West will acknowledge the complaint within five working days and identify the person handling it.
2. A person who is sufficiently independent of the matter will review the relevant information. Anyone complained about will normally be told the substance of the complaint and given a fair opportunity to respond.
3. Project West may ask for clarification or further information and may speak with relevant staff or witnesses. Information will be limited to what is necessary for a fair review.
4. A written response will normally be provided within 15 working days of acknowledgement. It will summarise the complaint, the enquiries made, the findings, whether each material point is upheld, partly upheld or not upheld, and any action or learning that can appropriately be shared.
5. If more time is needed, Project West will explain why and provide a revised response date.

If the complaint is about the Manager or the person who would normally handle Stage 1, it will be allocated directly to the Director or to a suitable independent reviewer.

7. Stage 2 - final internal review

If you remain dissatisfied, write within 14 calendar days of the Stage 1 response. Explain which findings or parts of the procedure you want reviewed and why. A Director or independent senior reviewer who did not make the Stage 1 decision will conduct the review.

Stage 2 will be acknowledged within five working days. The reviewer will consider whether the complaint was investigated fairly, whether relevant information was considered, whether the findings were reasonable, and whether the procedure was followed. A final written response will normally be issued within 20 working days. If that is not possible, you will receive an explanation and a revised date. Stage 2 completes Project West's internal procedure.

8. NACCC after the internal procedure

Project West is accredited by the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC). After the Project West procedure has been fully exhausted and concluded, a complainant may ask NACCC to consider whether Project West followed its own complaints procedure.

Important: NACCC does not reinvestigate the substance of the complaint, reconsider evidence or overturn Project West's decision. NACCC considers whether the centre followed its procedure. A NACCC complaint must be submitted within 12 weeks of Project West's final response.

NACCC Complaints Notification Form: naccc.org.uk/for-parents/making-a-complaint/

Email: contact@naccc.org.uk

Post: National Association of Child Contact Centres, 5 Russell Place, Nottingham NG1 5HJ

9. Confidentiality, records and learning

- Complaint information will be shared only with people who need it to review the matter, meet safeguarding or legal duties, obtain professional advice, or respond to an authorised referrer or regulator.
- Records will be kept securely and in accordance with Project West's Records Retention and Data Protection arrangements.
- Complaint themes, outcomes and learning will be reviewed by management. Actions may include changes to practice, guidance, training, supervision, documents or systems.
- Where a complaint overlaps with court proceedings, safeguarding enquiries or another investigation, Project West may pause or adapt the timetable to avoid prejudice or unlawful disclosure. The complainant will be told where this affects the response.

10. Sources informing this procedure

This procedure has been reviewed against NACCC's current public complaints guidance and contact information. It should be read alongside Project West's Safeguarding and Child Protection Information and Privacy Notice.