



Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Policy Paces Sheffield Adult Services Provision

Date Written: October 2024

Authorised by: Ruth Liu

Reviewed: April 2026

Next Review: April 2028

Contents

1. Aims.....	
2. Definitions and scope.....	
3. Complements and suggestions	
4. Principles for investigation	
5. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the adult service management)	
6. Complaints against the adult service management	
7. Persistent complaints.....	
8. Record-keeping	
9. Learning lessons	
10. Monitoring arrangements.....	

1. Aims

We strive to provide a day provision that works to a high standard of social care for all our adults. The adult service management team and staff team work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. The adult service has procedures in place to encourage and address compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints by parents or carers. The following policy sets out the procedures that the adult service follows in such cases.

Our adult service aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents or carers, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes
-

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The adult service will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

2. Definitions and scope

A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”.

The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

Paces intend to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines

3. Compliments and Suggestions

These are always welcome and very encouraging to adult service Manager, Lead Conductor and staff. The adult service encourages feedback or opinions from its users, parents and carers in practice this dialogue is continuous, sometimes directly to the member of staff and also through more formal methods. These include replies to parent and carer questionnaires, e-mails to adultservices@paccessheffield.org.uk, letters or items posted in the post box outside the main entrance. It may not always be possible to act immediately but our users and the service always benefit so please don't hold back.

3. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

The adult service expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than 3 months afterwards. We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The adult service will keep a record of the complaint (see section 8) and make this available to Sheffield City Council social care team on request.

4. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the Management team or Trustees)

Stage 1: informal/Concern.

It is natural that parents/carers may, occasionally, be concerned about an aspect of their child's wellbeing while attending the adult service. This could include issues concerning the services approach to aspects of care, behavioural problems or any other issue. The adult service welcomes enquiries from parents about any matter. Staff will explain the adult service practices, policies, and how they affect the users. The vast majority of concerns will be handled by the adult service management team or the key worker. If in doubt, keep asking until you are completely satisfied as all staff are eager to help. The usual format is to speak to a member of the staff team or key worker in the first instance, or to contact the adult service office to arrange an appointment to discuss your concern with whoever you wish. At all times the staff will do their best to help to resolve a problem. If occasionally parents feel they must state their concern formally, this too is not a problem. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the adult service either by telephone 0114 5510419 or via email adultservices@pacessheffield.org.uk

The adult service will acknowledge informal complaints within 7 days, and investigate and provide a response within 14 days. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

Stage 2: formal

How to raise a complaint

Formal complaints can be raised:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- By a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the adult service.

The adult service management team will call a meeting to clarify concerns and seek a resolution within 7 days of receiving a complaint. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting and should inform Paces of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the adult service may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the adult service will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The adult service management will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 6 weeks.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the chair of governors within 14 days.

How to escalate a complaint

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the chair of governors:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The chair of trustees will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 4 weeks.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the chair of governors in writing within 14 days.

Stage 3: submit the complaint to an independent reviewer

The independent reviewer is appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor. This person must not, at any time, have been Paces trustee or a member of staff, and must not have been the parent of a registered or former registered user at the adult service. They must also not have been directly involved in any matter detailed in the complaint.

The independent reviewer will convene a review meeting with the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence.

The independent reviewer, the complainant and the adult service representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions.

The complainant, proprietor and a member of the adult service management team, and where relevant, the subject of the complaint, will be given a copy of the findings and recommendations made by the independent person.

The adult service will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 4 weeks.

6. Complaints against the Adult service management

Complaints made against the adult service management team should be directed to the head of conductive education / head of operations

7. Persistent complaints

Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with the adult service after the complaint procedure has been fully exhausted and the adult service has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the chair Trustees (or other appropriate person in the case of a complaint about the chair) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the adult service again about the same issue, the adult service can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- Paces adult service has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, *and*
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the adult services position and their options (if any), *and*
- The complainant is contacting the adult service repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The adult service will be most likely to choose not to respond if:

- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the adult service with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, and/or
- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, and/or

- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, adult service staff

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

Once the adult service has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email.

The adult service will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the adult service acts reasonably.

Unreasonably persistent complaints

Complaint campaigns

Where the adult service receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the adult service, then the adult service may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on Paces website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the adult service response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

8. Record-keeping

The adult service will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law and our data protection policy.

9. Learning lessons

The board of trustees will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the senior leadership team, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the adult service can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

10. Monitoring arrangements

The board of trustees will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The governing body will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 9.