

Complaints Procedure

Autism Early Support Trust Ltd is committed to providing high quality education, therapy, assessment and support for children with autism, or similar communication disorders from age 2 – 12. Our specialist nursery setting can cater for the needs of these children from age 2-5.

We aim to provide a warm and caring environment within which the individual needs of each child can be developed.

We work in partnership with parents and we welcome suggestions on how to improve our work.

This procedure applies to all our services (both our Circle Centre nursery and our AES Outreach provision). It is designed to ensure we manage, respond to, and resolve complaints effectively.

This is achieved through a procedure which;

- Is accessible to complainants
- Provides a simple system for making complaints about any aspect of our service(s)
- Responds to verbal and written complaints whether made in an informal or formal manner
- Is a timely and open process with designated timescales and a commitment to keep the complainant informed on the progress of the investigation
- Is fair to both our staff and complainant
- Maintains the confidentiality of the complainant and any staff member(s)
- Provides the opportunity to learn from the complaint to improve our services

Making concerns known

All staff have a duty to listen to concerns raised by patients, carers / service users, and to try and resolve them locally seeking advice from their line manager, and referring on any complaint to the Head of Children's Services (HOCS).

- A parent who is uneasy about any aspect of our provision should first of all talk over any worries with the HOCS (who will investigate and handle the complaint).
- If this does not have a satisfactory outcome within 2 weeks, or if the problem recurs, the client (parent, or client of our services) should put the concerns or complaint in writing and request a meeting with the CEO.
- The final stage of complaint resolution following a meeting with the CEO, would be to contact the Chair of Trustees if the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved

The registering authority (OFSTED) would be involved if there seemed to be a possible breach of registration requirements at our nursery or if a child appeared to be at risk.

- Parents may register **formal** complaints regarding our educational provision (Circle Centre Nursery) directly with the registering authority by contacting:

OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Quote Autism Early Support Trust Ltd's registration number: EY 462850
Or you can phone **0300 1231231**

Any complaint relating to our outreach services should be directed to the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) regarding therapies. Please follow the link below if you wish to pursue a complaint via HCPC.

[Fitness to practice - How to raise a concern or make a complaint about a health and care professional | \(hcpc-uk.org\)](https://www.hcpc-uk.org)

Complaint Process

Upon receipt of a complaint, the following must be considered:

- All staff complaints relating to staff members and other stakeholders need to be dealt with sensitively
- Complaints may be made verbally to any member of staff or in writing by the parent / service user. The complaint may be formal or informal
- Confidentiality of the parent and any known wishes expressed by the parent / service user that information should not be disclosed to any third parties should be respected
- If staff are not empowered to handle a verbal complaint- written details must be passed onto their line manager or the HOCS within 48 hours of the complaint having been made.
- Staff must record the details of verbal and written complaints using the complaint log book for Circle Centre (**located in the upstairs office at Circle Centre**), or the complaint form for our Outreach services (**located in the Buckingham office**).
- The following details should be recorded:
 - Nature of the complaint
 - Details of the investigation
 - Action taken
 - Resolution of complaint
- Staff must ascertain from the complainant whether the complaint is formal or informal
- All written complaints must be addressed to the HOCS

All complaints will receive a written acknowledgment of their complaint within 3 working days. The written acknowledgement should include the detail of the complaints process that the organisation will follow.

Complaint investigation

1. HOCS will receive all complaints regarding our services, with the exception of any complaint relating to the HOCS directly. In this case the complaint should be directed to the CEO.
2. The HOCS will review the complaint and inform the appropriate member(s) of the senior team
3. A letter of acknowledgement written by the HOCS will be sent to the complainant within 3 days
4. The relevant member of the senior team may be asked to assist the HOCS in undertaking the complaint investigation. Information will be gathered formally, this may include interviewing staff, examining records etc
5. The complaint will be risk assessed following the appropriate risk assessment process

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

All investigation findings must be fully documented

Complaint resolution

Once a complaint investigation has been completed:

- A letter containing a full response should be sent to the complainant within 2 weeks of the concern being raised, outlining the findings and any further action(s) taken
- If it is not possible to reply within the 2 week timeframe, a letter explaining the delay should be sent.
- The findings of the complaint together with the actions taken should be documented in the complaints log book
- Action plans following a complaint investigation should be completed with a time scale and review, and this will involve the staff concerned whenever possible.
- The complaint will be reported to the CEO to ensure lessons learnt and practice is improved / changed as indicated by the result of the investigation
- Lesson learnt should be shared in staff bulletins and discussed at team meetings to demonstrate the actions implemented to improve our services
- If AES does not receive any further response from the complainant following receipt of the investigation letter, AES will assume the complaint is resolved and closed.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the complaint they will be advised to contact OFSTED or HCPC.
- If you wish to contact the CEO or Chair of Trustees they can be contacted on:
sarahsweet-rowley@autismearllysupport.org.uk (CEO) and grahmwylie@autismearllysupport.org.uk (Chair of Trustees)

Learning from a complaint

AES will ensure that:

- Staff involved in complaints will be kept updated regularly via their line manager and HOCS
- Feedback will be provided when the complaint is resolved
- AES reviews complaints it receives relating to its services and activities to ensure actions are implemented
- Lessons learnt are shared in staff bulletins and at various meetings to demonstrate actions have been implemented to improve service delivery and practice

AES believes that most complaints or comments are made constructively and can be resolved at an early stage. We also believe that it is in the best interests of the AES and parents that complaints should be taken seriously and dealt with fairly and in a way that respects confidentiality.

This procedure is reviewed every 2 years unless there is a change to legislation or regulations