



The **Daffodil** Project CIC

Complaints Policy

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1. Policy Statement

The Daffodil Project CIC is committed to providing a high-quality, inclusive, and accountable service to children, families, professionals, and staff. We recognise that occasionally things may go wrong or fall short of expectations. This policy outlines our clear and fair approach to handling complaints in a way that is timely, transparent, child-centred, and respectful to all involved. We welcome complaints as opportunities to reflect, improve, and uphold our values of integrity, safety, and compassion. Where a complaint has implications for employment, safeguarding, or organisational governance, it will be handled with appropriate confidentiality and professionalism in consultation with external HR providers where necessary.

- Uphold the rights of individuals to raise concerns or complaints without fear of retribution
 - Ensure all complaints are handled fairly, proportionately, and respectfully
 - Provide accessible pathways for informal and formal resolution
 - Consult with external HR advisors where issues involve employment rights or staff conduct
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2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Children attending The Daffodil Project CIC
- Parents, carers, and family members
- External professionals and stakeholders (e.g. schools, therapists, commissioners)
- Staff, volunteers, trustees, and contractors raising concerns about organisational decisions or interpersonal conflict
- Complaints relating to any aspect of service provision, behaviour, staff conduct, safeguarding practice, or policy implementation

It covers both informal feedback and formal complaints and applies across all operational areas: on-site services, off-site activities, communications, and outreach.

This policy does **not replace** the following policies:

- **Grievance Policy** (for internal staff disputes)
 - **Whistleblowing Policy** (for public interest disclosures or safeguarding concerns)
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3. Legal Framework

This policy aligns with the following UK laws and standards:

- **The Children Act 1989 & 2004** – Duty to safeguard and promote welfare
- **Equality Act 2010** – Duty to avoid discriminatory handling of complaints
- **Employment Rights Act 1996** – Relevant where staff are involved in allegations or process outcomes
- **UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018** – Governs confidentiality and record-keeping
- **Ofsted Education Inspection Framework** – Mandates that concerns and complaints are handled transparently
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)** – Ensures safeguarding remains paramount in all concerns raised

- Ensure complaints handling complies with safeguarding, employment, and data protection law
 - Treat all individuals with fairness and without discrimination
 - Involve external HR advisors or legal specialists where employment or safeguarding concerns arise
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4. Principles of Our Complaints Handling

The Daffodil Project CIC is committed to a complaints process that is:

- **Child-centred:** The wellbeing and voice of the child are central in any complaint relating to their care or experience.
 - **Accessible:** Our complaints process is available in multiple formats (written, verbal, assisted) and inclusive of communication needs.
 - **Timely:** We acknowledge and act on complaints promptly and provide timeframes for resolution.
 - **Non-retaliatory:** No complainant or staff member will be treated unfairly for raising a complaint or being named in one.
 - **Transparent:** We explain the steps taken, outcomes reached, and rationale for decisions made.
 - **Proportionate:** Minor issues are resolved informally where appropriate, while serious or repeated concerns follow formal escalation.
 - **Impartial:** Investigations are carried out by individuals not directly involved, and external advice is sought if impartiality cannot be guaranteed internally.
 - Ensure complaints processes protect the child's voice, dignity, and outcomes
 - Provide clear, tiered options for resolution
 - Avoid conflict of interest by allocating complaints impartially
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5. Who Can Make a Complaint

Complaints may be made by:

- Parents, carers, or legal guardians of children attending the setting
- Children and young people, with support from staff or family where appropriate
- Members of the public or professionals who have engaged with the centre
- Staff or volunteers with concerns about decision-making, treatment, or service delivery
- Trustees and governors with concerns about conduct, safety, or organisational values

Complaints may be made **on behalf of a child**, but the child's experience and wishes will always be central to the process.

- Accept complaints from all relevant parties connected to the organisation
 - Ensure children are supported to raise concerns in a way that is developmentally appropriate
 - Enable complaints to be made anonymously, where necessary
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6. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be raised in the following ways:

- **In person** – speaking to a member of staff or the Director directly
- **In writing** – via letter or email to the Director (or Chair of Trustees if complaint is about the Director)
- **By phone** – with a note taken and summarised back for accuracy
- **By third-party advocate** – where the complainant requires support (e.g. due to disability, language, trauma)

We provide:

- Easy-read versions of this policy on request
- Visual, verbal, and non-verbal methods for children to express concerns
- Advocacy support for parents/carers with additional needs

All complaints should ideally be raised within **three months** of the issue occurring, unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. trauma, illness, lack of capacity).

- Provide accessible routes for complaint submission
 - Accept verbal or assisted complaints as valid
 - Support vulnerable complainants with advocacy and adjustments
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7. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- Most concerns can be resolved through a conversation with a relevant member of staff.
- The aim is to address the issue quickly, clarify misunderstandings, and take immediate action where possible.
- The issue and outcome are recorded informally in a feedback log.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

- If unresolved, the complainant submits their concern in writing (or via supported method).
- The Director acknowledges the complaint within **5 working days**.
- A designated member of the senior team (not directly involved) is appointed to investigate.
- The investigation may include interviews, file reviews, and consultation with external advisors.
- A formal written response is provided within **15 working days**, including any action taken or proposed.

Stage 3 – Appeal

- If the complainant is not satisfied, they may appeal in writing to the **Chair of Trustees** within **10 working days** of the Stage 2 outcome.
- An impartial review panel is convened (usually comprising trustees or external professionals).
- A final written outcome is issued within **20 working days**.
- This concludes the internal process.

In cases involving **employment-related issues**, staff may request that the complaint be handled in parallel with or under the **Grievance Policy**, and **external HR support will be sought where allegations or disciplinary matters arise**.

- Use a three-tiered system to allow escalation and review
 - Appoint impartial investigators to prevent bias
 - Involve HR and external parties for employment or safeguarding complaints
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8. Confidentiality

We treat all complaints with sensitivity and in accordance with our Data Protection and Safeguarding Policies. Information is shared on a **need-to-know basis only**.

- Complainants will be informed who is handling the complaint
- Identities will not be disclosed beyond what is necessary to investigate or respond
- In safeguarding cases, relevant statutory bodies may be informed as required by law

Confidential records of complaints are stored securely, with restricted access and clear version control.

- Maintain confidentiality without compromising safety or fairness
 - Disclose information only where legally necessary
 - Store all complaint documentation securely
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9. Unreasonable or Malicious Complaints

While all complaints will be considered fairly, we reserve the right to manage repeated, abusive, or vexatious complaints by:

- Setting communication limits or boundaries (e.g. single point of contact)
- Declining to investigate where no new information or context is presented
- Seeking legal advice or involving external mediation
- Offering support where challenging behaviour is linked to trauma or unmet need

A complaint will never be deemed “unreasonable” solely because the complainant is persistent or emotional—this will be judged based on behaviour, not sentiment.

- Distinguish between genuine frustration and vexatious intent
 - Provide trauma-aware handling while maintaining staff wellbeing
 - Apply firm boundaries where repeated complaints become harmful
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10. Monitoring & Review

- The policy is reviewed **annually** by the Director and Chair of Trustees.
- A log of all formal complaints, outcomes, and actions is maintained securely and reviewed termly to identify patterns, training needs, or systemic issues.
- Complaints data is reviewed (anonymously) as part of staff supervision, development planning, and quality assurance audits.
- Trends or safeguarding risks emerging from complaints are escalated immediately to the DSL and reviewed by the Board.

- Feedback from complainants is used to improve future practice and inform staff training.
- Review complaints for themes and service improvements
- Use findings to inform training, policy change, or environment adjustments
- Ensure trustees oversee accountability and learning

Signed:

Magdalena Van De Voort



Director, The Daffodil Project CIC

Date: January 2025