



Representations & Complaints Procedure

Introduction to our Complaints Process

We encourage all our staff to be receptive and sensitive at all times to representations and complaints made about our services.

No individual or organisation is perfect and we can always learn from what people have to say about us. Adopters for Adoption is part of the Polaris Group of Companies, and the Polaris Complaints Manager has overall responsibility for ensuring that formal complaints receive a prompt and fair response.

We invite you to say at once if you are not happy with any aspect of the service we are providing or planning to provide, so that matters can be resolved as soon as they arise, without developing into a complaint.

When a complaint does arise, we seek to create an atmosphere in which a child/young person, adoptive parent or other responsible adult can confidently make a representation or complaint knowing that it will be dealt with promptly and with fairness.

You may make a complaint about services that you or your family have received, or have not received. You may also make a complaint on behalf of a child.

Adopters for Adoption want to assure you that no person will be subject to any reprisal, neither will the service they receive be reduced, as a result of making a complaint.

If you need any help or support at all in making your complaint, or in communicating what you want to say, Adopters for Adoption will make sure that you receive that help.

It is important for you to be aware that you must make your complaint within one year of the matters which are the subject of your complaint

taking place. If your complaint is made later than this, the Polaris Complaints Manager will exercise discretion as to whether or not to accept your complaint. In making this decision, they will consider the reasons you give for not making your complaint nearer the time, and whether or not it is still possible to investigate your complaint fairly, despite the passage of time. This decision will be given to you in writing, with reasons.

If you were a child at the time of the events, your complaint will usually be accepted and will be investigated as fairly and thoroughly as possible.



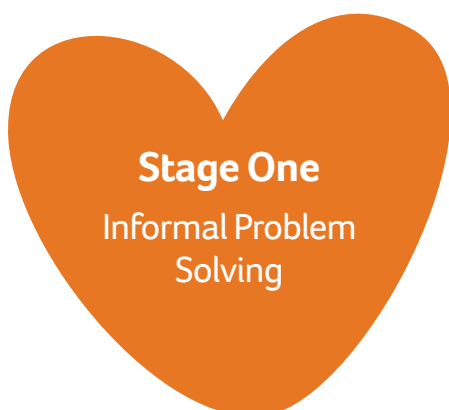
All complaints will be fully recorded in writing. The written record, including details of the investigation made, the outcome and any actions taken as a result, will be retained for at least three years from the close of the complaint process.

Ofsted, who monitor our work, have the right to ask for details of any complaints made about us. Information about a complaint may also be passed to organisations who commission our work, such as local authorities.



What happens if I make a Complaint?

Adopters for Adoption have a three stage process, in order to make sure that we respond to complaints as swiftly and effectively as possible:



Stage 1 – Informal Problem Solving

If you have a complaint, please tell the Adopters for Adoption staff with whom you are working, or their manager.

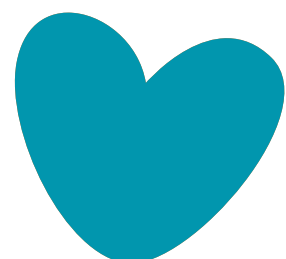
You can do this by writing to them, or by ringing and asking for what you say to be written down as a complaint, or face to face, being clear that you want what you are saying to be regarded as a complaint at Stage One of the process.

Those staff will work with you to resolve the issue by clarifying the concerns, negotiating an improved situation, and taking practical action. When this process is complete the manager will write to you to confirm what has been agreed. This letter should be sent within ten working days, or a maximum of twenty working days with your agreement, from the date of your complaint.

The majority of complaints are resolved in this manner, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

If you do not feel that your complaint has been resolved by this process, you are entitled to move to Stage Two. You may request this either by replying to the letter you receive at the end of Stage One, or by contacting the Polaris Complaints Manager on 01527 556480. (Full contact details appear at the end of this Guide.)

You may request for your complaint to be considered at Stage Two from the outset, if you have good reason to believe it cannot be fairly considered by the staff who are working closely with you - perhaps because of the serious nature of your complaint. This course of action will also be taken if your complaint concerns a senior manager or director.



Stage 2 – Independent Investigation

If the issue has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, we consider it important that someone independent of the immediate situation should look into the matter.

At this stage the investigation will be carried out by an independent investigator identified by the quality assurance team who has had no previous involvement with the matter concerned. This may be a member of the quality assurance team or an external contracted individual with relevant qualifications and experience. Any such appointment will be made known to and discussed with all parties, including you as the complainant, before the investigation begins.

The independent investigator will speak to you in order to fully understand the complaint, will interview other people concerned, and will have access to relevant paperwork, subject to permissions being given. You will be asked for your permission. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the views of children will be sought and taken into account in the light of their age and understanding.

A report will be produced for the Polaris Complaints Manager with the Investigator's findings, conclusions and recommendations for action. The independent investigator will be asked to produce this report within 20 working days from the date of the agreed written statement of your complaint. The Complaints Manager will then write to you within 7 working days of receiving the independent investigator's final report, to let you know the decisions that have been

made as a result of the investigation. Some or all of the Investigator's report may be made available to you, dependent upon confidentiality and data protection issues.

If it is not possible to complete these processes within the intended timescales, we will keep you informed of the reasons and expected time scale, and seek your agreement.



Stage 3 – Review by a Senior Leader

If you remain dissatisfied with the response at stage Two, you may request that a complaint is reviewed by a Senior Leader to consider the complaint investigation and its findings.

If the complainant continues to feel that their complaint has not been dealt with to their satisfaction, Stage 3 may be implemented.

The complainant should inform the Head of Service preferably in writing, that they wish to progress their complaint to Stage 3, within 20 working days of receipt of written confirmation of the outcome of Stage 2, providing reasons why they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 of the procedure.

The Head of Service will acknowledge this request within 10 working days, with an explanation of the Stage 3 process. The Head of Service will notify the Chief Executive Officer, Managing Director, and Responsible Individual in writing of the complaint.

A Senior Leader will review the Complaint within 20 working days. The complainant will need to be kept informed by the Head of Service of any delays in responding to the complaint should more time be required by the Senior Leader to consider the information provided.

The Senior Leader reviewing the complaint will complete a written report of their findings, which will include:

- The process and adequacy of the investigation prior to Stage 3;
- Findings on each of the complaints being investigated;

- Conclusions / outcomes reached;
- Recommendations of actions required / learning outcomes to be considered.

Following completion of the review by the Senior Leader, the Registered Manager/ Head of Service will inform the complainant process.

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This is the final stage of our agency's representations and complaints procedure. If having been through our complaints process, the complainant still feel dissatisfied then they can contact our regulator, Ofsted. Ofsted investigates concerns to make sure that we as a registered agency continue to meet the National Minimum Standards and associated regulations and remain suitable for registration.

Please find more information about our complaints procedure in our Representations and Complaints Procedure leaflet which is issued to prospective adopters and can be found on our website www.adoptersforadoption.com. This can also be requested from us at any time.

If you remain dissatisfied

Adopters for Adoption is registered, inspected and regulated by Ofsted, as an Voluntary Adoption Agency.

When considering complaints Ofsted does not act as a complaint adjudicator. Ofsted does not decide if complaints are upheld, partially upheld or are unsubstantiated. Instead the regulator investigates concerns to make sure that the registered agency continues to meet the National Minimum Standards and associated regulations and remains suitable for registration.

If you approach Ofsted regarding a complaint about Adopters for Adoption, Ofsted will expect you to have first made a formal complaint under this procedure, unless you have good reason not to do so.

Ofsted will then take appropriate action according to the nature of the complaint. They may ask Adopters for Adoption to look into the concern and report back to them, particularly if the complaint involves someone in our employment. Where Ofsted does this they ask providers to tell them what they did to investigate, the conclusions they reached and any actions they took or intend to take as a result of their findings. If Ofsted believes this is not sufficient they will take further action, which may include carrying out an inspection.

Ofsted may decide to investigate by visiting Adopters for Adoption. An investigation visit can be either announced or unannounced, or it may be carried out as part of a prescribed inspection visit. At the end of an investigation the inspector will decide what action, if any, Ofsted or the provider must take for the provider to comply with the national minimum standards and associated regulations and remain fit for registration.

Ofsted will write to you to acknowledge your complaint, and again once the investigation

is complete. Ofsted will provide you with a factual statement about the steps they took to deal with your complaint. They will also let you know any action that they took, or required Adopters for Adoption to take as a result of an investigation, and whether or not Adopters for Adoption continues to be suitable to provide adoption services.



Useful Contact Details

Polaris Complaints Manager:

Polaris Complaints Manager
Malvern View, Saxon Business Park,
Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior,
Bromsgrove, Worcs
B60 4PH

T: 01527 556480

F: 01527 578176

E: contact_us@polariscommunity.co.uk

Regulatory Body for Adoption Agencies:

Office for Standards in Education, Children's
Services and Skills (OFSTED)
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Office of the Children's Commissioner
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT



adopters
for adoption