



Comments & Complaints Policy

Rationale

The Complaints Policy in relation to Acorns After School sets out the procedures for both making and dealing with complaints about any aspect of our service.

A clear and effective Complaints Policy is an important part of providing our quality school aged childcare education service.

The goals of this policy are to ensure that:

- Anyone who comes into contact with our service will be assured that if they ever have a comment to make or need to make a complaint it will be welcomed and responded to appropriately.
- Parents or guardians are informed about the Complaints Policy and Procedures at registration.
- All staff members are aware that if they receive a complaint there is a clear and specific procedure in place to deal with it in a confidential manner.
- Complaints are taken seriously, resolved efficiently and effectively, and recorded appropriately.

Legislation and regulatory requirements

This policy reflects the requirements of the [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#) under Part VIII Regulation 32 and Regulations 2016 (Síolta Standard 3: Parents/guardians and Families, Síolta Standard 4: Consultation, Síolta Standard 10: Organisation) (National Standard 1: Information, National Standard 3: Working in Partnership with Parents or Guardians, National Standard 4: Records, National Standard 7: Complaints, National Standard 11: Child Protection which also sets out what is to be included in a Complaints Policy.) Regulations 2016 Children's needs

Children need their parents/guardians to be able to easily, safely and effectively raise concerns with or about the service provided, on behalf of their children, to ensure that the quality of care and education they receive is always safe and of good quality.



Statement of Intent:

- We are fully committed to giving careful attention and a courteous, timely response to suggestions, comments, or complaints so that we can learn from them and continuously improve our Service.
- All complaints are dealt with in a confidential manner without fear, favour, or prejudice.
- The Service has a consistent and unbiased approach used to manage all complaints within the Service.
- All complaints are investigated promptly, taken seriously, and handled appropriately and sensitively.
- Complaints are managed and reported in line with the Service's Complaints policies and procedures
- The written record of a complaint is available on the premises for inspection by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Parents'/Families' needs

Parents/guardians need to:

- Feel comfortable about approaching the service staff to comment on:
 - the way services are provided; and
 - the way the curriculum works or does not work for their child.
- Feel able, and supported, to make a complaint about any aspect of service provision without fear of a negative impact on their child's experience in the setting.
- Know that they will be kept informed about the progress of any investigation into their complaint and about the outcome of the investigation.

Staff needs

Staff members need to know:

- That the service policy is to welcome and accept any comments or complaints.
- What the procedure is if any parent or other individual raises a concern with them and/or makes a complaint about any aspect of the service.
- Who is responsible for managing complaints within the service,
- Who must carry out investigations.



- Who is responsible for recording information about the complaint and the details that should be recorded.
- That they absolutely must ensure that no complaint results in any negative impact on any child in the setting.

Management needs

Management needs:

- To acknowledge the possibility of complaints and be very clear on how they will receive, manage, investigate and record any complaints in advance of any being made.
- To ensure that the policy and procedures relating to comments and complaints is clear, comprehensive and meets the requirements of all relevant legislation and regulations, in particular the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Data Protection legislation.
- To know that all members of the staff team will be clear on their roles and responsibilities in relation to receiving comments or complaints from parents/guardians or others, about any aspect of the service provided.
- To ensure that parents/guardians and other stakeholders can be given clear policy information on registration as well as in the event of a complaint being made.
- To be clear on the roles of Tusla, the HSE, the Health and Safety Authority and An Garda Síochána in relation to investigating certain complaints.

National Quality Frameworks used in developing this policy and procedure:

- [Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework](#)
- [Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education](#)

Policy Statement

Acorns After School is committed to providing a quality service to children and their parents/guardians and we regularly evaluate our services in order to ensure this and to monitor the standard of our performance.



While this is always our aim, we accept that sometimes things do not always go to plan. In such circumstances, we want to know, so that we can put things right and learn from our mistakes.

We welcome all comments on our services, positive or negative. Complaints will be accepted and investigated irrespective of the nature of the complaint or who the person making the complaint is.

Acorns After School gives a commitment to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, sensitively and appropriately to ensure that the standard of service provided by *Acorns After School* is maintained at a high level. The quality of the service provided to any child and family will never be adversely affected because a complaint has been made.

The complaints procedure is kept as simple as possible. Anyone making a complaint will be supported through the process as needed and given a copy of the 'Complaints Policy and Procedures'. The complaints policy and procedures are displayed on our website and in the lobby of each classroom.

When a complaint is received the manager will be informed immediately. Every effort will be made to address the issue informally before moving to a formal procedure.

If necessary the complaint will be fully and appropriately investigated. A written acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint will usually be sent within 1 working day and a response within 3 days.

Where a complaint concerns a member of staff, we will address the situation with due regard to our obligations as an employer and the rights of the employees, the terms governing their conditions of employment and the procedures outlined in the staff handbook.

If a complaint is made against the Manager, Sarah Quigley Burns or Jennifer Grant (Co-Directors) will conduct an investigation and ensure appropriate management and recording of the complaint.



In the event of errors being made, *Acorns After School* will endeavour to correct them as quickly as possible and to give an explanation and, where appropriate, an apology.

All complaints made – both formal and informal – will be recorded in detail. Records will be stored in the Complaints Records File and will be retained for at least two years following resolution of the complaint as required by regulation.

All information relating to any complaint will be treated as confidential and shared only on a need to know basis. In the case of a Child Protection concern the Child Protection Policy will apply. All records of complaints will be kept in full compliance with the [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#), Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2014. The Complaints Records File will be available to those authorised to inspect it, including the Tusla Early Years Inspector.

The evaluation of the outcome of the complaint will form part of the considerations for future policy and practice and risk management procedures.

Procedures & Practices

How a complaint is received

Acorns After School is committed to open and regular communication with parents/guardians. We welcome all comments on our services, whether they are positive or negative.

Complaints will be accepted irrespective of the nature of the complaint or who the person making the complaint is.

How to make a complaint

A complaint can come to the attention of the service in a number of different ways:

- Contact, by phone or in person, with a staff member or by letter, email, and/or text.
- The complaint may be made by the person directly affected or by a person acting on their behalf.



To whom a complaint can be made

If a person has a complaint about some aspect of the service's activity, or about the conduct of an individual member of staff, it will often be possible to resolve the problem by simply speaking to the individual concerned and/or to the service manager Erika Deery.

Some complaints may fall more into the category of disagreements or differences of opinion, and may be resolved through discussion and compromise on the part of both the person making the complaint and the staff member concerned.

How a complaint will be managed

Stage One: Informal Process

In the first instance, those who wish to make a complaint are encouraged to speak directly to the relevant member of staff. If they do not want to do this, they can speak with Erika Deery, Manager, who will try to resolve the problem.

The details of the complaint and the response will be recorded by the *Manager, Erika Deery*.

If Erika Deery has a direct or indirect involvement in the matter being complained of, the complaint will be passed to Sarah Quigley Burns, Co-Director.

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be found, then Stage Two of the procedure will formally come into operation.

Stage Two: Formal Process

If informal discussions of a complaint or problem have not produced a satisfactory resolution to the situation, those making the complaint should be encouraged to put their complaint in writing to the *Manager, Erika Deery*, using the form attached to this policy [see sample form attached]. All necessary support will be provided. Relevant names, dates and any other important information on the nature of the complaint should be included.

Erika Deery will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing as soon as possible – usually within 1 working day – and fully investigate the matter within 3 working days. If there is any delay, those who made the complaint will be advised of this and



offered an explanation. The *Manager*, Erika Deery, will be responsible for sending them a full and formal written response to their complaint.

The *Manager*, with the assistance of appropriate staff members, will carry out a full investigation. This may involve:

- Interviews with all relevant individuals
- Minute taking of all meetings
- Individuals being informed that they may have an appropriate individual present with them during the investigation.

Where no grounds for the complaint are found, the person making the complaint will be notified and information detailing the next stage will be provided.

Where the *Manager* finds grounds for the complaint, they will ensure that all of the required details are available from the person making the complaint (using the Complaints Form, see Appendix A).

Staff members must participate and support the investigation of any complaint, where requested. Any staff member involved in the complaint will be supported throughout the process.

Any complaints not within the scope of the service to investigate, will be referred appropriately. For example:

- If the *Manager* has good reason to believe that the situation has Child Protection implications, they must inform the designated Child Protection Officer and ensure that the local Tusla Duty Social Worker is contacted, according to the procedure set out in the Child Protection Policy.
- If any person involved in the complaint has good reason to believe that a criminal offence has been committed they should contact An Garda Síochána.

Where a complaint relates to Health and Safety it may be appropriate to notify the Health and Safety Authority.

Communication of the Response/Outcome

The formal response to the complaint will be sent from *Erika Deery* to the person who made the complaint and copied to all relevant members of staff if appropriate. The



response will include recommendations for dealing with the complaint and any necessary amendments to the service's policies and/or procedures and/or risk management procedures, arising from the investigation.

The *Manager* may arrange a time to meet the person who made the complaint and any other relevant individuals, such as members of staff, to discuss the complaint and the service's response to it. The *Manager* will judge if it is best for all parties to meet together or if separate meetings are more appropriate.

The person making the complaint will be notified of the progress of an investigation on an ongoing and regular basis by the manager in writing, by email or letter.

The person making the complaint will be immediately informed of the outcome of the complaint once it has been completed.

Stage 3: Review

If, at the conclusion of the above process, those who made a complaint are dissatisfied with the response they have received, the original complaint along with the service's response will be passed to Jennifer Grant, Co-Director, who will ensure that there is a complete review of the complaint. This review will be undertaken by a person not previously involved.

Jennifer Grant will communicate a detailed response, including any actions to be taken, to *both the Manager and* the person who made the complaint, within 5 working days.

Recording of Complaints and Confidentiality

Records of complaints must be kept in the Complaints Records File, separate from children's files. All information relating to complaints is to be shared only on a need-to-know basis.

Where a complaint involves a child protection concern the Child Protection Policy will apply.

Where a complaint involves an allegation of a breach of a person's rights (child or adult) and/or a criminal action or behaviour the appropriate authorities must be informed.

The record of the complaint must be kept for at least two years from the date on which the complaint has been dealt with.



The record is to include:

- The name of the complainant
- The nature and details of the complaint
- The date and time the complaint was received
- The manner in which the complaint was received
- The name of the person who received the complaint
- The level of risk to the child or children arising from the subject of the complaint
- The manner in which the complaint was dealt with, including:
 - Any local resolution implemented
 - Any specific meetings held with the person making the complaint and minutes of any such meetings
 - Timelines for investigation of the complaint and notification of the outcome to the person making the complaint
- Details of the investigation carried out
- The outcome of the investigation
- Details of any corrective or preventive actions to resolve the complaint
- Information given to the person making the complaint about the progress and the outcome of the complaint
- of the investigation and whether the action taken to resolve the complaint was accepted
- Details of any plan implemented for the child's care as a result of the complaint as agreed with the child's parents/guardians
- Details of any review to the risk management process in light of the complaint.
- Details of any changes to practice or policy.

All records of complaints must be kept in full compliance with the [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#), [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and [Freedom of Information Act 2014](#).

Only members of staff authorised by the *Manager* can access the Complaints Records File.

Role of Tusla

If a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the service's response or feels for any reason that they cannot bring the concern directly to the manager/registered provider, they can contact Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate.



Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate does not investigate individual concerns or complaints. All information received is assessed to determine if any concerns relating to the health and welfare of children exists within the remit of the 2016 Regulations. The information determines the focus and timing of Tusla's inspections.

Where Tusla Early Years Inspectorate considers that there is a potential risk to the health, safety and welfare of children in an Early Years Service, Tusla Early Years Inspectorate will take appropriate actions with the service provider to ensure that the risk is addressed.

To contact Tusla regarding a concern about this or any early years service you can contact in the following ways:

- Email: early.yearsui@tusla.ie
- Call: 061 461700
- Or download a complaints form at:

www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/concerned-about-the-operation-of-a-eyes/

Send it to: Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, Unsolicited Information Office, 2nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.

The Tusla form can also be posted on request.

● 5. Communication Plan [For staff & families]

All parents/guardians are to be informed of the policy and procedures regarding Comments and Complaints on enrolment. Staff members will check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy will be included in the Parent/Guardian Handbook. This policy will also be reviewed with staff at induction and annual staff training. When a complaint is received, the person making the complaint will be given a copy of this Policy and Procedures.



A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents/guardians in the Policy Folder located in each classroom lobby and www.mylittleacorns.com.

Parents/guardians may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents/guardians and the staff team will receive written notification of any updates.

6. Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

- Staff Training Policy
- Confidentiality/Information Sharing Policy
- Records and Record Keeping Policy
- Grievance and Discipline Policy and Procedures
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Communication Policy
- Partnership with Parents Policy
- Comments and Complaints Form (*see sample form attached*)

7. References/Supporting Documents/Related Legislation

- [Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework](#)
- [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act 2014](#)
- [Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education](#)
- Supporting Quality: Guidelines for Professional Practice in Early Childhood Services (3rd edition) by Geraldine French. Barnardos' Training and Resource Service, 2008

- **Who Must Observe This Policy**

This policy must be observed by all managers and all staff members.

Complaints Made By School Aged Children:

Following their induction to their new school aged childcare class children will be introduced to the complaints policy and procedure. During this time



children will be shown where child-friendly complaints forms are stored in their classroom. They will also be provided with the service's email address that only the Manager has access to should they want to make a private complaint. Please See Appendix B for a copy of the Child Friendly Complaints Form. Complaints Procedures will be displayed on the classroom wall and classroom lobbies so children can read them.

How a complaint made a child will be managed:

In the first instance, if a child has a complaint they will be encouraged to speak to their class teacher. If they do not want to do this, they can speak with Erika Deery, Manager, who will try to resolve the problem.

The details of the complaint and the response will be recorded by the class teacher using the Accident and Incident form. The teacher will discuss how the issue that the child has might be resolved. An action plan will be put in place and drawn up with the child. The teacher will discuss this with the School Aged Childcare Manager, Erika Deery.

The child's parent/guardian will be informed of the issue and provided information with how the complaint is being dealt with.

Contact Information

If you need more information about this policy, contact:

Name	Erika Deery
Phone number or email	Littleacorns101@hotmail.com 074 93 29430

11. Policy Created

Date this policy was updated	10/07/2023
Review Date:	10/07/2024

Manager Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Deery', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Date: 18th July 2023



Appendix A

Complaints Form

Please complete all sections of this form using block letters.

Name of person making complaint:

Address:

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Phone number:

Date & time complaint was first made:

Date & time of incident:

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Name of person to whom complaint was first made:

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Name of Registered Provider:

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Details of Complaint:

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Please continue on an additional sheet if required

Signature: **Date:**

Please return to: Erika Deery, Manager, Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Playschool and Acorns After School, 8-17 Gaelic Park, Carndonagh, Co Donegal, F93 XDD1

Read by Manager

Signature: . **Date:**



Appendix A

Child Friendly Complaints Form

Please complete all sections of this form using block letters.

My Name:	
My Acorns After School Teachers:	
Today;s Date:	
What was the day of the incident?	
What time did the incident take place?	
Did you tell a teacher at the time?	
What was the teacher's name?	
Can you write a short paragraph of your complaint below:	
What to do with this complaint:	
Please return to: Erika Deery, Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Playschool and Acorns After School, 8-17 Gaelic Park, Carndonagh, Co Donegal, F93 XDD1 Read by Manager Signature: Date:	You can also email Erika directly on erika@mylittleacorns.com