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Complaints Policy

Quality Standards

Legislation	Details
Regulation 7: The support standard	The registered manager must ensure the young people receive individual and tailored support that meets their needs, including providing information about how to make a complaint or representation in relation to the support and accommodation provided and how any such complaint or representation will be dealt with.

Key Principles

Principle	How this applies to Complaints
My voice is respected, heard and advocated for, so I can influence the support I receive	Establishing clear and effective systems to receive and act on complaints helps foster a responsive environment where young people feel heard and listened to.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Allegations Against Staff Member Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- Notification of Serious Events Policy
- Quality Assurance Policy
- Safeguarding Young People Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy



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Policy Statement

Policy Aims

This Complaints Policy sets out the values, principles and procedures underpinning Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd's approach to receiving, handling, and responding to complaints we receive about our supported accommodation or staff from or on behalf of young people in our accommodation.

The Policy has been designed to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines and UK legislation, including the Supported Accommodation (England)

Regulations 2023, the Young people Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and Data Protection Act 2018.

At Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd, we value the importance of providing clear and accessible channels for young people to give feedback and raise concerns about their supported accommodation. Young people have the right to make complaints at any time without fear of repercussions, assured that their concerns will be handled appropriately, investigated when necessary, and lead to effective resolutions.

Regulation Compliance

In line with Regulation 31 of the Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023, we have set up a procedure to manage complaints and representations. Our processes adhere to governmental guidance on statutory complaints, ensuring the safety and welfare of young people while continuously improving our services.

Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to anyone making or receiving complaints about the supported accommodation we provide or the conduct of our employees. It outlines procedures



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for filing, escalating, and investigating complaints and specifies the roles and responsibilities of all involved parties.

Policy Principles

- Complaints are seen as opportunities for improvement.
- Allegations involving staff will be investigated impartially, prioritising the safety of young people.
- No young person will face reprisal for raising a concern.
- Issues unresolved internally may be escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman, Safeguarding Partnerships, or Ofsted.
- Allegations of mistreatment or exploitation, including abuse or harassment, must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and handled according to safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding Responsibilities

Disclosures of abuse, criminal misconduct, or other serious concerns must be reported to the DSL and appropriate authorities, even without a formal complaint. For vulnerable individuals, safeguarding policies must be implemented, and referrals made where appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities Registered Manager (RM):

- Act in the best interests of the young person.
- Respond to complaints promptly, ideally within three days.
- Notify and consult the Director on handling complaints and any necessary interim actions.
- Ensure relevant procedures, such as safeguarding and disciplinary measures, are implemented if required.
- Arrange for an advocate to support the young person if needed.
- Maintain a comprehensive record of all complaints and actions taken.
- Keep accurate and secure records of all complaints, actions, and outcomes, in compliance with data protection laws.
- Provide summaries of complaints and responses to inspectors upon request.



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- Retain records for 10 years and ensure confidentiality is upheld, except where disclosure is necessary for the protection or well-being of a young person.

Confidentiality

Complaints will be handled with strict confidentiality, following the Data Protection Act 2018, Human Rights Act 1998, UK GDPR, and related legislation. Information will only be shared with involved parties or disclosed to safeguard the welfare of a young person. Unauthorised disclosure may result in disciplinary action.

We welcome feedback and will make every effort to resolve concerns. If resolution cannot be achieved internally, we will guide complainants on further escalation options.

Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd encourages complaints from stakeholders who identify concerns with our supported accommodation. Complaints may be made by:

- Young people or their advocates
- Parents, guardians, or carers
- Social workers
- Accommodating authorities
- Staff members
- Members of the public

Scope of Complaints

Complaints may relate to:

- Decisions or delays in decision-making
- Quality, suitability, delivery, or non-delivery of supported accommodation
- Staff conduct or behaviour
- Application of policies or assessments
- Impacts of decisions or policies on young people



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Complaints should generally be made within 12 months of the issue arising. However, complaints outside this timeframe may be considered if there are valid reasons, and the matter can be fairly investigated.

How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be submitted in person, by phone, email, post, or by completing a complaint form. Complainants should specify whether they prefer the matter to be handled formally or informally. Formal complaints involve a detailed investigation but may take longer to resolve.

Complaint Process

All young people are informed of their right to make complaints during their admission.

Stage 1: Local Resolution

- **Informal Complaints:** Staff receiving informal complaints should listen carefully, record concerns, and involve line managers to seek a quick resolution. If unresolved or serious, the issue will follow formal procedures.
- **Formal Complaints:** Formal complaints can be made via a complaint form, letter, email, or verbally. A written record must be created within 24 hours. The complaint is sent to the Registered Manager (RM) unless it concerns the RM, in which case another appropriate person (e.g., the Director or LADO) handles it.

The RM must:

- Formally acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours.
- Contact the complainant within three working days to outline the action plan, timescales, and further steps.
- Provide information about advocacy services (e.g., Independent Complaints Advocacy).



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Complainants can expect:

- Regular updates on progress.
- A thorough investigation and explanation of findings.
- Assurance of actions to address and prevent recurrence of the issue.
- Support to mitigate any impacts of the issue.

The complaint should be resolved within 10 working days (or up to 20 days with the complainant's agreement). If unresolved, the complaint progresses to Stage 2 (Investigation).

Recourse to Other Procedures

Complaints involving safeguarding or disciplinary issues will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL will oversee investigations and notify appropriate authorities (e.g., Local Safeguarding Partnerships or Police).

Outcomes of safeguarding or disciplinary actions will be recorded by the RM. Refer to Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd's Safeguarding Policies for further details.

Stage 2: Investigation

Complaints at Stage 2 are addressed through a formal investigation by an Investigating Officer and an Independent Person appointed by the Local Authority. This stage may be initiated at the complainant's request or if Stage 1 is deemed inappropriate by mutual agreement.

The RM will decide if new complaints should proceed directly to Stage 2. On receipt of a Stage 2 complaint, the RM will:

- Appoint an Investigating Officer and an Independent Person.
- Inform any staff named in the complaint and their line manager (unless this would prejudice the investigation).



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The investigation will aim to determine the legitimacy of the complaint and potential solutions. This process involves interviews with relevant parties, with all records securely maintained. Regular updates will be provided to the complainant, including any significant changes in the investigation process.

Investigation Timeline and Outcome

Investigations should conclude within 28 working days. Upon completion, the Investigating Officer will provide a report with findings and recommendations, reviewed by the RM. A formal written response will be sent to the complainant, including:

- Copies of investigation reports and supplementary information.
- Details of the process and conclusions.
- Whether the complaint is upheld, in full or part.
- Any remedial actions or lessons learned.
- Confirmation of actions taken to prevent recurrence.
- Guidance on how to escalate to Stage 3 if dissatisfied.

The RM will monitor the process to ensure fairness and use the findings to improve service delivery and staff training.

Staff Named in Complaints

Staff involved in complaints will be informed and supported throughout the process. Investigations will remain fair and timely, focusing on improvement rather than blame. Outcomes may involve supervision, training, disciplinary actions, or referrals to authorities, depending on findings.

Stage 3: Review Panel

If dissatisfied with Stage 2 outcomes, complainants can request a review within 20 working days by contacting the RM. A Review Panel of three independent members, including a Chair, will be convened.



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The Panel will meet within 30 working days of the request, inviting the complainant, Stage 2 investigators, and relevant parties. Attendees will receive documentation at least 10 working days before the meeting.

Outcome and Escalation

The Panel's recommendations will be shared with the complainant and RM within five working days. The RM will respond within 14 working days, explaining the decisions made and next steps. If unresolved, complainants may escalate their case to external bodies.

Escalation to External Bodies

If internal resolution is unsatisfactory, complaints can be referred to organisations such as:

- **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO):** Complaints can be made online within 12 months of the issue after completing Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd's process. The LGO will assess the case and may recommend actions, such as issuing an apology, reconsidering a decision, or improving procedures. Further details about the LGO process and contact information are available on their website or through their support team.

Ofsted

- Ofsted, as the governmental regulator, does not resolve disputes but uses complaints to guide its inspection and regulation of supported accommodations. If you believe Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd is not meeting its regulatory requirements and remain dissatisfied after exhausting the internal complaints process, you can contact Ofsted at 0300 123 1231 or via their website.
- Provide key details such as the people involved, dates, times, and copies of written complaints. Examples of relevant concerns include:



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- Risk of harm to young people (e.g., allegations of abuse).
- Systemic safeguarding failures.
- Inadequate support for young people (e.g., missing medical appointments).
- Regulatory non-compliance (e.g., misuse of resources).
- Ofsted will assess your complaint alongside other intelligence and may take actions such as referring matters to safeguarding bodies, requesting information from the provider, or conducting inspections. You will receive confirmation of receipt but will not be notified of Ofsted's next actions.
- **For employees raising concerns:** Ofsted offers a whistleblowing hotline at 0300 123 3155 or email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk.

Local Safeguarding Young People's Partnership (SCP)

- Safeguarding concerns are addressed through Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd's safeguarding procedures, including referrals to the Local Authority, Social Supported accommodations, or Police.
- If you believe insufficient action has been taken, you can contact:
 - **Oxfordshire Safeguarding Young People's Board:**
Email: oscb@oxfordshire.gov.uk
 - **Oxfordshire MASH (Non-Emergency):** 0345 050 7666. Provide detailed information about the concern, those involved, and the handling of the issue.
 - For emergencies, call **999**.

Whistleblowing

Workers and former workers are protected under whistleblowing law when raising concerns about wrongdoing.

- Contact: Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline:
Tel: 0300 123 3155 |
Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line: 0800 028 0285



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- Refer to Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd's Whistleblowing Policy for further guidance.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The complaints coordination team will log and regularly review complaints to monitor compliance and identify trends. Complaints will be reviewed monthly by the registered manager, and an annual report will be prepared, including:

- Total complaints received and upheld.
- Themes and lessons learned.
- Actions taken to improve services.
- Cases referred to external bodies.
- Equality impact data.
- Annual complaints reports will be available to Ofsted inspectors upon request.

Quality Assurance

Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd ensures complaints contribute to organisational improvement. Measures include:

- Sharing lessons learned across the organisation.
- Using complaints data to assess performance and inform planning.
- Incorporating feedback into service development.
- These steps ensure continuous improvement in supported accommodations and care delivery.

Compliments

Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd values all feedback. Stakeholders can compliment individual staff members, departments, or the organisation as a whole. Compliments will be shared with relevant staff and management to recognise good practice and inform future improvements. These can be submitted verbally or in writing to any staff member, who will forward them to the appropriate manager.



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Training and Awareness

Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd ensures all staff and young people are familiar with the Complaints Policy through:

- **Staff Training:** Regular updates and inclusion in team briefings and all-staff bulletins.
- **Young Person's Guide:** Provided upon admission to supported accommodation.
- **Managerial Training:** Managers will receive specific training on implementing this policy.
- **Training Needs Analysis:** Identifying additional training needs and providing support as required.

Key Contacts

Complaints Manager / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- Renata Czechowicz (Registered Manager)
- **Phone:** 01865 890047
- **Email:** Renata@hitchcoxgroup.co.uk

Alternative Contact (HR):

- Jayne Andrews
- **Phone:** 01865 890047
- **Email:** Jayne@hitchcoxgroup.co.uk



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The Local Safeguarding Young People Board can be contacted using the following details:

- Name: OSCB
- Address: Oxfordshire Safeguarding Young People Board
 - County Hall
 - 4th Floor
 - New Road
 - Oxford
 - OX1 1ND
- Main Telephone:03450507666
- Out of hours: 0800 833 408
- Email: oscb@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- Website: www.oscb.org.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

- Name: Jo Lloyd
- Address: Oxfordshire Safeguarding Young People Board
 - County Hall
 - 4th Floor
 - New Road
 - Oxford
 - OX1 1ND
- Main Telephone:0345 0507666 / 01865 810603
- Out of hours: 0800 833 408
- Email: Email: lado.safeguardingyoungpeople@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- Website: [Oxfordshire Safeguarding Young people Board](#) ([Oxfordshire County Council](#)).



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Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Whistleblowing hotline: 0300 123 3155

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) Complaint

form:

Telephone: 0300 061 0614 (Mon/Wed 1pm-4pm; Tues/Thurs/Fri 10am-1pm)

Postal address: PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Young people (NSPCC)

Charity working to tackle child abuse and offer guidance to parents and professionals across the UK

Telephone: 0808 800 5000 (10am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Whistleblowing Advice Line: 0800 028 0285 (8am-10pm Mon-Fri; 9am-6pm Sat-Sun)

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Address: Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH

Website: nspcc.org.uk

More contact details: nspcc.org.uk/about-us/contact-us

Young people's Commissioner

The Young people's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza, promotes and protects the rights of young people and advocates for their views and interests.



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Telephone: 0800 528 0731

Email: help.team@youngpeoplescommissioner.gov.uk

Address: Young people's Commissioner for England,
Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith
Street, London SW1P 3BT

Website: youngpeoplescommissioner.gov.uk

Coram Voice

Rights advocacy organisation for young people and young people in care, care leavers or other young people who have or need a social worker in England.

Telephone: 020 7833 5792

Advocacy Helpline: 0808 800 5792

SMS: 07758 670 369

Email: info@coramvoice.org.uk

Address: Coram Voice, Coram Campus, 41 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ

Website: coramvoice.org.uk

Citizens Advice

Independent charity network offering free confidential advice on citizen's and consumer rights

[add details of local Citizens Advice - you can find them

at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/search-for-your-local-citizens-advice>]:

Name: Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens advice

Address: Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 3JD

Telephone: 08082787907

Email: Individualrights@Citizensadvise.org.uk



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Childline

Free confidential support for young people under 19 in the UK

Telephone: 0800 1111

Website: childline.org.uk

Guidance and Resources

Young people's Statutory Complaints Process (LGO 2022):

Local Government Ombudsman Contact Information:

- **Phone Number:** Helpline: 0300 061 0614 / Text Relay (for hearing impaired): 18001 0300 061 0614
- **Opening Hours:** Monday to Friday: 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
- **Website:** www.lgo.org.uk (You can submit complaints online and find more detailed information here.)
- **Address for Written Complaints:**
The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Policy Monitoring and Review

Compliance with this Policy and its procedures will be monitored by the Registered Manager, together with independent reviews by both internal and external audit on a periodic basis.

The Registered Manager is responsible for the monitoring, revision, and updating of this Policy.



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This Policy will be kept under review in light of operational experience and national guidance. The first review will take place one year from adoption, and positive action will be taken to resolve any issues.

After reading this Policy, you should be able to:

Understand what the complaints procedure is and how it operates.

Understand how the Complaints Policy operates at Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd and have an awareness of the actions we take in preventing, identifying and reporting concerns.

Understand the role you play in the Complaints Policy.

If you have not understood any of these points, please ask your line manager or trainer for further help.

Authorisation and Signature

This Policy is the authorised version agreed by the CEO of Orchard Therapeutic Care Ltd.

All employees are expected to follow this Policy and failure to do so could result in disciplinary action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ludivine Parmentier".

Ludivine Parmentier
Chief Executive Officer