



Swindon Family Contact Centre complaints procedure

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1. Who can make a complaint?

- 1.1 This complaints procedure is not limited to parents that have used the Centre. Any person, including those who have been unable to use the Centre's services, may make a complaint to SFCC about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

- 2.1 It is in everyone's interest that minor concerns and more serious complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. SFCC takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
- 2.2 If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, SFCC (Coordinator), will handle the concern.
- 2.3 We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, SFCC will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.
- 2.4 Often the concern may be something that is covered on the centre's website or in the information received before contact sessions. It is helpful to check this before raising a formal complaint. If this does not assist and you are still concerned, please contact SFCC Coordinator.

3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

- 3.1 Where you are unhappy about something, concerns should be shared verbally with a staff member at the centre. Often the complaint will be concluded at this point, if the Centre can assist you or explain the situation. If not, the Centre will take you through the complaints procedure.

Important considerations

- 3.2 Before making a complaint to a centre or to NACCC, consider the following:

It is important to understand that child contact centres may not always be able to offer you what you want and in particular:

- Centres may have waiting lists which mean sessions are not available when the parent wants or in some cases, at all.
- Not all centres can offer all types of contact (supported and supervised). A centre may therefore not accept a parent because they are not equipped to cover the contact needed.
- Where a centre is required to provide Court with a report, the report has to be independent. This means that parents are unlikely to have input into it and may not agree with everything in the report. If a parent is concerned by anything in the report, they can raise their concerns at Court rather than with the Centre. The Centre is not obliged to alter a report if asked to do so by a parent.
- Some centres are staffed entirely by volunteers and have limited opening hours – they may take longer to respond than a parent would like.
- Where the complaint is against a staff member, the Centre's investigation will need to be confidential to that member of staff and parents will not be made aware if any action has been taken against them as this is an HR matter.

3.3 If any of the above apply to the concern, please bear in mind before starting the complaints process that it is unlikely that the Centre will be able resolve the complaint to your satisfaction.

- If a parent wishes to make a complaint, they will need to be clear about what they are hoping to get from the complaint and what they want the Centre to do to make things better.
- Where cases are in court, information relating to the case remains the property of the Court and should not therefore, be shared without the specific consent of the Court.

4. Anonymous complaints

4.1 We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

5. Time scales

5.1 You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

6. Resolving complaints

6.1 At each stage in the procedure, SFCC wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation.
 - an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
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- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur.
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.
- an undertaking to review policies in light of the complaint.
- an apology.

7. Withdrawal of complaint

- 7.1 If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

8. The SFCC complaints process

Stage 1

- 8.1 Formal complaints must be made to the SFCC Coordinator (unless they are about the named person). This should be done, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), sent via email to swindonfamilycc@gmail.com. If the complaint is about the named person, please make complaint to Iryada Ashmore, Chair on swindonfamilycc@outlook.com.

The named person will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 working days.

Within this response, the named person will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The named person may consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the named person will provide a formal written response within 28 working days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If they are unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions SFCC will take to resolve the complaint.

The Coordinator will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

Stage 2

- 8.2 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the in writing to swindonfamilycc@outlook.com, outlining the basis of the complaint and the reasons for remaining unhappy with the process, within 10 working days of receipt of the Stage

1 response. This person will be separate from the day-to-day running of the centre and will not have been involved in stage 1 of the complaint.

The Chair will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing by email within 10 working days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Chair will consider the complaint and can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, they will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the centre's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair will provide the complainant with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 28 working days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact NACCC if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by SFCC.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions SFCC will take to resolve the complaint.

The conclusion of Stage 2 is final.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied. EG Cafcass, FPAS, & The Family Court Welfare Service, Local Authorities, Courts, or other referring bodies and/or LADO and the ICO, whichever is applicable.

9. Complaint Form

- 9.1 Please complete and return to SFCC swindonfamilycc@gmail.com who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name	
Children's name (if relevant)	
Your relationship to the child (if relevant)	
Address including postcode	

Daytime & evening telephone numbers	
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the Centre about it.	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	
Date:	
Office Use	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	

10. Roles and responsibilities

Complainant

10.1 The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible.

- co-operate with the centre in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.
- ask for assistance as needed.
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

10.2 The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing an open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough investigation to establish what has happened and who has been involved.
 - interviewing staff and other people relevant to the complaint if necessary.
 - consideration of records and other relevant information.
 - analysing information.
- liaising with the complainant as appropriate, to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct investigations with an open mind.
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any further complaint.
- be mindful of the timescales to respond.
- prepare a response that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

11. Next Steps - NACCC involvement

11.1 If the complainant believes the Centre did not handle their complaint in accordance with the complaints procedure, they can contact NACCC after they have completed Stage 2.

NACCC will not reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by SFCC. They will consider whether SFCC has adhered to the procedure.

Alternatively, the complainant might choose to complain to the organisation that made the referral to that service (Eg Cafcass, FPAS, & The Family Court Welfare Service, Local Authorities, Courts, or other referring bodies and/or LADO and the ICO, whichever is applicable). They may also wish to seek legal advice.

11.2 If the complainant decides to escalate their concern to NACCC and stages 1 and 2 are complete, they should complete the form available directly from NACCC and submit this to: contact@naccc.org.uk.

The form must only be submitted to NACCC after the enquiry has been fully exhausted and/or concluded by the centre and within a twelve-week timescale of the conclusion of stage 2.

Additional information relating NACCC's role in complaints handling and oversight can be located here: <https://naccc.org.uk/for-parents/making-a-complaint/>

