

Comments, Complaints and Compliments

Your views are important

At St Francis' Children's Society (SFCS), we welcome your comments about the services we offer. Your views help us to make sure that we are giving the best service we can, and are important in letting us know where we may need to make changes.

This leaflet tells you how to make comments, complaints, or compliments about SFCS.

If you need help to understand this leaflet, please tell us or ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

If English is not your first language it may not always be possible for us to work with you as we would wish. However, if we cannot do so we will try to help you to find another agency.

This leaflet is available in alternative formats, on request.

If you are a child or a young person we want to hear from you too. Please ask for our Children and Young Person's leaflet.

We will ask you for your comments about our services as we work with you. You can also contact us at any time or fill in the last page of this leaflet and send it to us.

- Comment** Share your views with us, if you have a concern, or an idea for improving our services
- Complaint** Complain about a service, or the way you have been treated
(Another person may make **Representation** on your behalf)
- Compliment** Praise a particular service or a member of staff

SFCS aims to offer the best possible services and seeks to work in partnership with all those who use its services.

SFCS regularly asks people to comment on the services as they receive them, and service users are involved in delivering, for example, preparation groups for adopters, and are represented as members of the Adoption Panel and the Council of Trustees.

SFCS is particularly fortunate in having contact with service users which lasts over many years, and they will have a valuable long-term view of SFCS to share with us.

However, we welcome the views of everyone who receives a service, or wishes to represent a view on behalf of someone else who is receiving a service.

Whether you want to share a complaint, a concern, or a compliment, you may choose to speak to the person working with you, usually your social worker, or their line manager, or you may choose to contact the Registered Manager of SFCS (the Chief Executive Officer). You can share your views with us by telephone, in a letter, or by asking to meet with us.

If your concern is about the Registered Manager then your complaint can be directed to the Director, Business Administration and Fundraising at SFCS. Alternatively, a complaint against the Registered Manager or the Registered Provider can be made directly to a person or organisation separate from SFCS (please see below).

We understand that sometimes it is not easy to say what you feel to the people who provide your service. If you need help, advice, or someone to help you make your views known, you can also contact:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

If you are a child or a young person, you can also contact **Ofsted** at the above address. You may also be able to contact other people who are listed in our special leaflet for children and young people, and on page 10 of this leaflet.

Complaint

What is a complaint?

"Making a complaint" is about telling someone that you are not satisfied with something. It may be about an unwelcome, or a disputed decision, a problem that has not been sorted or resolved. It may be about whether the quality of a service is good enough, whether it is appropriate, or whether it was offered in the right way.

A complaint may be shared verbally, through speaking with someone, or in writing - in a letter or via email.

Most complaints can be dealt with through an informal process when the service user feels able to talk to the person who delivers the service to them, or to that person's manager or supervisor. However, sometimes the service user may feel that that is not enough, and they want to make a formal complaint.

Who can complain?

Anyone who receives or has asked us for a service has the right to complain, including people who have been refused a service.

If you make a complaint we will only discuss it with the people who need to know, in order to try to put things right and we will tell you who they are.

What you tell us will not affect the services and the support we offer.

If your complaint is about something that is not the responsibility of SFCS, then we will help you to direct your complaint to the right person or organisation.

Stage 1: Tell the people who run the service

Informal complaints

If you are not happy about the service we offer, we hope that you will be able to tell the person who is working with you. That member of staff should then tell their manager or supervisor about your complaint and also explain how they have dealt with it. This helps us to make sure that the matter has been handled properly. We will keep a written record of your complaint, because we need to have an overview of all concerns and complaints, so that we can ensure that we offer the best possible services.

If you feel that the person you are working with cannot help you with the matter, or if you are not happy with the answers they give, then you should contact their manager. If you are not sure who is their manager, you can ask your worker or any member of staff at the SFCS offices.

You can contact their manager by telephone, by letter or email; or by asking to see them.

Most problems can be sorted or solved by discussing them with the people who manage the service. They will investigate or look into the matter and, wherever possible, you will get an answer within 10 days.

Stage 2: If you are not satisfied that the problem has been solved, you can ask for a further investigation and for your complaint to be looked at again.

Formal complaints

All formal complaints must be put in writing to the Representations Officer. At SFCS, the Representations Officer is the Chief Executive Officer, who is separate from the day to day management of the social work of the agency.

You can contact the Representations Officer:

- > by letter addressed to The Representations Officer at SFCS
- > by email: enquiries@sfcs.org.uk

You can ask a friend, family member, or advocate who may be able to help you think through what you want to complain about and how you want to share your view.

The Representations Officer will let you know within three working days that your complaint has been received.

The Representations Officer will need to make sure that your complaint is legitimate or valid, and that it should be directed to SFCS.

The Representations Officer may:

- > telephone you and ask you for more details
- > arrange to meet with you to discuss your concerns
- > talk to other people who are involved

Investigation

When it is a legitimate or valid complaint, the Representations Officer will let you know that, and will appoint an Independent Person.

The Independent Person is someone who is not responsible for the service you are complaining about and is not employed by SFCS. The Independent Person will look into all the circumstances that led to your complaint, may interview you or other members of staff, may look at all the records concerning the matter you are complaining about, and will then recommend what should be done.

The Independent Person will aim to complete the Investigation with 28 days of the day when it was agreed that you had a legitimate or valid complaint. The findings and recommendations of the Independent Person will be given to the SFCS Representations Officer and of course to you. If someone else had made the complaint on your behalf, they will also be advised of the recommendations.

Sometimes Investigations take longer than 28 days. If this happens we will tell you and let you know the outcome as soon as we can.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Investigation you should tell us (via the Representations Officer) within 28 days.

STAGE 3: If you are not satisfied with the response to your formal complaint you can take it further.

Review Panel

Under these circumstances, the complaint will then be considered by a Review Panel. The Panel usually meets within 28 days of the Representations Officer receiving your request to move to Stage 3. The Review Panel will be made up of at least three people. Two of these people may be senior members of SFCS, but the Panel will be chaired by a person who is independent of the agency. This person will not be the same Independent Person who has already looked at the complaint.

You are welcome to come to the meeting of the Review Panel and to bring someone with you, if you so wish. We will make sure that you know the date of the Panel, ten days before the meeting. The person you choose to come with you may be a relative, friend, or a professional advocate. They may help you to work out what to tell the Panel, they may attend the meeting with you, and if you so wish they may speak on your behalf. You and your advocate may wish to present your concerns in a written statement to the Panel, or may wish to speak to them verbally.

After the meeting the Panel members will make recommendations to SFCS and will notify you of those recommendations. SFCS must consider its original decision, taking into account the Panel's recommendations, and alongside the views of the Independent Person who was first appointed, to decide what action should be taken.

The Chief Executive Officer at SFCS will aim to write to you, letting you know the final decision within five working days.

Any changes or action which it is decided should be taken will be implemented as soon as possible after that final decision is reached.

If you are still not satisfied, you can contact:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

If you want to get other independent advice, organisations such as The Citizens' Advice Bureau may be able to help you, and your local MP may also give independent advice.

If you are a child or young person, or if you want to help a child or a young person to make a complaint, you should see the SFCS leaflet for children and young people and also page 10 of this leaflet.

Children and young people

We want to listen to you

- > You have the right to be heard
- > You have the right to express yourself
- > You are important and adults need to remember this
- > You can speak to your Social Worker and/or their Manager or Supervisor
- > You can speak to the Adoption Manager
- > You can ask a friend, teacher or other person to talk to us on your behalf

- > You can also contact:

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

We produce a special document called 'Complaint & Talk Back Book for Children and Young People'. This gives you further advice and details of how you can make a complaint. It also provides you with lots of useful telephone numbers for organisations which can support you and help you share your views.

Comments, complaints and compliments - an overview

St Francis' Children's Society values all comments, whether positive or negative, which are received about the services offered.

All comments are very carefully considered and regularly reported to the Council of Trustees, so that action can be taken to ensure that we maintain a high standard of service.

The people who work with or for SFCS aim to be polite to you at all times. In return we ask that you treat our staff and those who volunteer their services, politely and with respect. If you are not happy with the way that you are dealt with then we ask that you pass on your concerns to the next stage of the complaints procedure as explained in the leaflet.

Our comments, complaints and compliments policy and procedure is regularly reviewed. If you have any suggestions for improvement please let us know.

Finally, if you wish to contact us in writing to express a particular view, you can use the tear-off slip at the back of this leaflet.

Feedback form

You may fill in this form if you want to make a complaint or comment about the service you have had from St. Francis' Children's Society.

Name.....

Address.....

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Telephone: Home Work.....

Email.....

It would be helpful if you could fill in the sections below. However, if you do not feel able to do so, we will contact you to get the details from you.

1. What is your complaint about?

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2. How do you think we can help?

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Signed..... Date.....

Please send this form to:

St Francis' Children's Society

Collis House
48 Newport Road
Woolstone
Milton Keynes MK15 0AA

Alternatively, you can telephone us on **01908 572700** or email us at **enquiries@sfcs.org.uk**