

Policy Reviewed:	September 2026
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Complaints Policy

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out how The Plan B AP CIC manages and responds to complaints relating to its administrative operations and educational provision.

We are committed to providing a high-quality service and to ensuring that everyone connected with Plan B AP CIC can raise concerns or complaints with confidence that they will be handled fairly, respectfully and without prejudice.

We value all feedback as an opportunity to improve our provision and relationships. Every concern and complaint is treated seriously, investigated promptly and thoroughly, and, where upheld, appropriate action is taken to prevent recurrence.

Please note that anonymous complaints will not be formally investigated. If you wish your correspondence to be treated as a formal complaint, please state this clearly.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Provide an accessible, fair and transparent complaints procedure.
- Encourage parents, carers, social workers, placing authorities, students and members of the community to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity through appropriate channels.
- Promote mutual understanding and positive relationships among all parties.
- Maintain an ethos of collaboration for the benefit of staff, learners and service users.
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation, including the *Education Act 2002* and *Alternative Provision Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (2013, updated 2023)*.

3. Confidentiality

All complaints are handled with appropriate confidentiality. Documentation and information are shared only with those directly involved in investigating or resolving the issue.

Raising a complaint will never adversely affect a young person's education, care or placement with The Plan B AP CIC. We are committed to ensuring that no one is penalised for raising genuine concerns.

All complaint records are securely stored in accordance with our *Data Protection Policy* and *UK GDPR* principles. Records will be retained for six years after closure and then securely destroyed.

4. Accessibility and Support

This policy is available:

- On our website
- In printed form on request

Complainants who require assistance—such as translation, advocacy, or SEND-related support—will be offered appropriate help to make their complaint understood.

5. How We Manage Concerns and Complaints

Stage 1: Informal Concern

1. Most issues can be resolved quickly and informally through direct communication with the relevant staff member.

2. We aim to resolve informal concerns within one working day, where possible.
3. If the issue cannot be resolved immediately, it will be referred to the appropriate senior staff member, who will ensure continued follow-up until resolution.
4. If the concern involves the staff member directly, the complainant should contact Vikki Gillard, Office Manager.
5. A written note of the informal concern and actions taken will be kept in the office complaints file and, where relevant, in the young person's record.
6. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they will be informed of their right to proceed to Stage 2 (Formal Complaint).

Stage 2: Formal Complaint – Appeal to the Principal

1. The complainant submits a written complaint to John Gillard, Principal, outlining the original concern, the response received, and reasons for remaining dissatisfied.
2. The Principal will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days.
3. The Principal will investigate by:
 - Interviewing relevant parties;
 - Reviewing related documents and records; and
 - Conferring with at least two Directors, if necessary.
4. A written response detailing findings, decisions and any required actions will be issued within 15 working days of acknowledgment (unless a longer timescale is required, in which case the complainant will be informed).
5. If the complaint concerns the Office Manager or Principal, the matter will be referred directly to the Committee Members.
6. All Stage 2 complaints will be logged in the central complaints register.
7. Following each investigation, a review of working practices will be undertaken to identify and implement any required improvements.

Stage 3: Final Appeal – Committee Members

1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may appeal in writing to the Committee Members, stating why the Stage 2 outcome is unsatisfactory.
2. Receipt will be acknowledged within 10 working days.

3. The Committee Members will:
 - Review all documentation;
 - Speak with relevant individuals; and
 - Conduct any further investigation deemed necessary.
4. The final written decision, including any actions to be taken, will be sent to the complainant within 20 working days of acknowledgment.
5. This decision is final and concludes the internal process.
6. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or family member at any meeting during the complaints process.
7. Where complaints are linked to ongoing or potential legal proceedings, investigations may be paused to avoid prejudicing those proceedings. Complainants will be notified in writing if this occurs.

6. External Review

If, after exhausting all internal stages, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may refer the matter to the relevant external body:

- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) – for complaints concerning public services or local authority-funded placements.
Website: www.lgo.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 061 0614
- Ofsted may also consider certain complaints where a registered education provider is alleged to have failed to meet its legal obligations.
Website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

7. Monitoring and Review

- All complaints are logged, tracked and reviewed to identify themes or recurring issues.
- Lessons learned will inform staff training, safeguarding practice and service improvement.
- The Principal will provide an annual report to the Committee Members summarising the number and type of complaints received and the actions taken.
- This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure continued compliance with:
Department for Education (DfE) guidance on *Alternative Provision*;
Local authority expectations (Hampshire County Council); and Current best practice in complaints handling.