



Muswell Hill

**Child
Contact
Centre**

**at Muswell Hill
Methodist Church**

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre aims to provide families and referrers with the best possible service. We value openness and honesty and your opinions, comments and/or suggestions, which could help us to improve services, are always very welcome. If you feel something has gone wrong then you have the right to make a complaint. We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and to improve our services, as well as a chance to put things right for the person who has made the complaint. 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 below.

1. Important considerations

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. Muswell Hill only offers supported contact. A centre may not accept a parent because they are not equipped to cover the contact needed.
- 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.

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 to 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.

2. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

3. Time scales

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.

4. Who can make a complaint?

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 the Coordinator about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

5. The difference between a concern and a complaint

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. Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the coordinator will handle the concern in the first instance

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

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 contact.centre@mhmc.org.uk

6. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Muswell Hill child Contact Centre 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.
- 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 a complaint

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

Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre complaints process

Stage 1

Complaints should be made initially to the Coordinator or Team Leader who is on duty on the day in an informal manner. If the

complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved there and then, then please put the basis of your complaint in writing to the Coordinator. This can be sent by post or email to Muswell Hill Contact Centre, Muswell Hill Methodist Church, 28 Pages Lane, Muswell Hill N10 1PP or to contact.centre@mhmc.org.uk

It is helpful if you clearly state what you are unhappy about, and give details about what has happened, why something has caused you concern and, if applicable, what you would like to happen to put things right.

The Coordinator will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days. S/he will then investigate the matter and will attempt to resolve the issues to the satisfaction of all concerned. A full written reply will be sent within 15 working days.

The reply will:

- Set out the complaint so that the complainant can be sure it has been understood.
- Describe the event and circumstances surrounding them.
- Set out the findings, giving reasons for the decision
- Apologise on behalf of the Child Contact Centre if the complaint is upheld and explain the steps it has taken to avoid it happening again.

If your complaint is about the **Coordinator** you should send your complaint to the **Chair of the management committee** (see stage 2 below), marking it 'Private and Confidential'.

Stage 2

If you are unhappy with the coordinator's response, then you may notify the Chair of the Management Group within 14 days of receiving the reply that you wish to take it further. S/he will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days. Three members of the management committee will then consider all the previous information and speak to you and the volunteers involved. *(The chair of the management committee has discretion to reduce this to two should there be a problem with availability or conflict of interest.)* A written decision will be sent to all those involved within 15 working days of receipt.

The reply you receive will inform you of the action taken to investigate the complaint, whether it has been upheld or not, and any conclusions or action taken as a result of the complaint. You will also be informed how to progress to the next stage if you do not feel the problem has been satisfactorily resolved.

Stage 3

If after this procedure has been carried out you are still not happy with the response, then details should be sent in writing to the Chair of the Muswell Hill Methodist Church Council (or their representative) who will further investigate the complaint with 2 other Church members, one of whom should have links to the Contact Centre, and send a reply within 30 days.

Stage 4

If after this procedure has been carried out you are still not happy with the response, then you may write to the Chief Executive,

8. Next Steps - NACCC Involvement

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 Muswell Hill Contact Centre. They will consider whether Muswell Hill Contact Centre has adhered to the procedure.

Alternatively, the complainant might choose to complain to the organisation that made the referral to that service (Cafcass or Children's Services). They may also wish to seek legal advice.

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@nacc.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.

9. NACCC's role in complaints handling

As a membership organisation NACCC has no responsibility for the staffing or day-to-day running of member centres; however, NACCC advises, supports, and accredits centres and requires member centres to work to the highest standards. Whilst centres are members of the NACCC Organisation, each centre is independently managed and run.

NACCC will not therefore, be able to investigate any complaint in detail, they will only look at whether the Centre has handled the complaint in line with their own complaints procedure. NACCC will not comment on the outcome of the complaint, conclusions will solely be based upon how well the procedure was followed.

If NACCC concludes that the Centre has not followed its own procedure, they may ask the Centre to look again at the way in which it has handled the complaint. This may not alter the Centre's decision. Only the Centre themselves can determine the substance of the complaint so it is always preferable to try to resolve issues direct with the Centre at an early stage.

10. NACCC Oversight

Once the form has been received, if it demonstrates that the process outlined at stages 1 and 2 has not been followed, the form will be returned to its author and they will be advised to follow the centre's complaints procedure.

Please do not send confidential information to NACCC, this will not be considered as part of the complaints process. Any information of this type received will not be filed and will be deleted or destroyed.

Once the form has reached the Complaints Officer at NACCC, 10 working days are allocated for the information on the form to be reviewed. During this time the complainant and the centre may or may not be contacted dependent upon the nature of the information shared.

On or prior to the 10th working day, the Complaints Officer will send a response to the complainant and the Contact Centre.

Should the complainant remain unhappy with the resolution offered by the Complaints Officer this can be escalated to the CEO/Trustees in writing using the above email address. The CEO/Trustees will respond within 10 working days of receipt. Their remit is only to consider if the Centre followed its procedure correctly. They cannot investigate your complaint in detail.

The decision of the CEO/Trustees is final.

11. Recording Complaints

If the complaint is resolved at Stage 1 then the matter shall be reported at the next Management Committee Meeting and recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

The written records of all complaints will be held by the Chair of the Management Committee, including any written legal or insurance responses and transferred to his/her successor as a strictly confidential file.

12. Awareness of the policy

We will publish the policy on our website and also have a copy available at the Contact Centre. Parents' attention will be drawn to it at their pre-visit and also by a notice on our weekly Notice board.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.		
Name: Daleep Mukarj	Signature:	Date:
This policy was last reviewed on: 5 th September 2024		

Complaints Form

To proceed with a complaint please complete this form and return either by email to contact CENTRE@mhmc.org.uk or by post to the Coordinator Muswell Hill Child Contact Centre, Muswell Hill Methodist Church, 28 Pages Lane N10 1PP

This form will enable the complaint to be dealt with appropriately.

Your name:

Your contact telephone
number

Your e-mail address:

Your Address:

Postcode:

Please give details of any specific/additional needs we need to bear in mind when we are dealing with your complaint and communicating with you.

Date & Time Incident Occurred:

Please give details of your complaint, stating names of staff wherever possible. *Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary*

What happened to cause you concern?

What is your complaint? *Please use bullet points*

What would you like to happen to put it right?

Please note that in investigating your complaint, we may need to provide any named persons with details of the complaint so that they have a fair opportunity to respond

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