

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE (EXTERNAL)
Guidance for individuals making a complaint

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1.0 Introduction

This policy and procedure is a positive process, that puts your needs at the centre of all that we do.

The Coram Group is led by the parent company 'Coram' (Thomas Coram Foundation for Children). We work in a vast array of communities and cultures through the UK and internationally, ensuring that children have better chances in life.

We ensure that all of our services and products are inclusive, responsive, up-to-date and fit-for-purpose by encouraging the users of our services to provide their insights, ideas and suggestions (regardless of how critical or positive). The majority of these comments and/or suggestions are received during our regular feedback/evaluation. However, it is inevitable that there will be times when someone who uses our services and/or products, or a partner organisation, or other professionals/practitioners with whom we work, have a legitimate need to make a complaint.

We view complaints as a valuable performance tool which allows us to improve our behaviours, systems and processes while increasing the quality of our services and products for the future.

There will be times when the root causes of your complaint are easy to identify and quick to remedy. In these instances, your complaint should be resolved quickly and efficiently by the relevant Coram Group staff and managers to everyone's satisfaction.

However, in some cases, investigating the complaint properly may be a longer process, and reveal complex problems which may require additional time to find effective solutions.

2. Scope

Not all formal complaints are dealt with by this policy and procedure. Some complaints are required to be managed under a different framework because they are subject to the rules and conditions of a specific regulatory body (for example our Coram Legal Practice service).

In addition, please note: complaints which fall under the categories below, will be dealt with as per the procedures set out in those policies:

- Child Protection / Safeguarding
- GDPR and Data Protection (including Subject Access Requests)
- Whistleblowing

3.0 Equality and Diversity

The coram group is dedicated to equality, diversity and inclusion in all that we do. A statement covering our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is available on our website. (Pathway: coram.org.uk / Jobs / About / Commitment to Equality and Diversity)

Any complaints regarding issues of discrimination will be dealt with by this Complaints Policy.

4.0 Complaints Procedure

4.1 Informal Complaint

This is usually where you make a complaint verbally, which is quickly remedied to everyone's satisfaction.

However, if the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, or you feel the need to proceed directly to making written, formal complaint – then proceed directly to **Stage 1 – Formal Complaint**.

4.2 Stage 1 – Formal Complaint

Formal complaints can be made to the senior manager of the service/department where the complaint is made, and to either:

Email: complaints@coram.org.uk

or via post:

Address:

Coram Group
Complaints
41 Brunswick Square
London
WC1N 1AZ

The Coram Group Head of Quality and Safeguarding will ensure that your complaint is managed under the correct procedure, and by the correct people and department.

If you wish to make a formal complaint but are not sure where to start, or what to include in your complaint, then there is a **Complaint Form** at **Appendix A** which you can use. This form can be completed by yourself, a trusted representative that you appoint, or a member of staff to whom you made the complaint. Ideally, this form should be signed by you to confirm that the information is accurate.

Regardless of whether you write a letter, an email, or use the form (**Appendix A**), you should indicate what resolution you are seeking.

Timescales in the Stage 1 process:

- Written acknowledgement of a complaint – 2 working days
- Investigation completed – 3 weeks, or progress reports issued to you at 2-week intervals

Formal complaints must be investigated by a local manager (usually at the level immediately senior to the staff member involved in the complaint), in consultation with the Head of Service or Managing Director.

The staff member investigating the complaint will respond to your complaint in writing generally by email unless your preference is via a different method of communication. If you are not satisfied with how the complaint was handled or the solution provided for your complaint, then you may proceed to Stage 2 – Appeal Process.

4.3 Stage 2 – Appeal Process

Under Stage 2, you have the right to appeal in writing to the CEO of the Coram Group **within four weeks** of receiving your written response to your Stage 1 complaint.

The Stage 2 Appeal should be made to the senior manager involved (who will be responsible for escalating the appeal to the CEO) and copied to the complaints inbox or postal address:

Email: complaints@coram.org.uk

or via post:

Address:

Coram Group
Complaints
41 Brunswick Square
London
WC1N 1AZ

At Stage 2 (The Appeal Process), the CEO of the Coram Group will review your complaint.

The CEO may (if required / requested / or more appropriate considering the nature of the complaint) appoint an ‘appropriate individual’ to investigate your Stage 1 complaint and the written response, and re-investigate if necessary

An ‘appropriate individual’ might be:

- A Director or Head of Service
- A Director or Head of Service from another service
- An appropriate, person independent of the Coram Group

Timescales for Stage 2:

- Written acknowledgement of the appeal by the CEO with 1 week
- Review completed within 3 weeks or progress reports issued to the person who made the complaint at 14 days intervals

You will be informed of; the outcome of the appeal, any action to be taken, and a timescale for the implementation of those actions in writing.

4.4 Stage 3 – The Honorary Members / Trustees

Should you feel that the Stage 2 Appeal was not resolved to your satisfaction, then you may escalate the complaint to the Honorary Members who sit on the Coram Group Board of Trustees. The Honorary Members include the Chairman / President, Secretary and other Trustee Governors of the Coram Group.

The details of this Stage 3 process will be explained to you at the end of the Stage 2 Appeal process if you feel that further action should be taken.

4.5 Beyond Stage 3

Where there is an appropriate statutory or regulatory body, you have the right to seek legal redress, or to make representation, to the relevant statutory/regulatory body.

Across the Coram Group we have a vast array of services and professional expertise which all fall under different statutory/regulatory bodies and each of those statutory/regulatory bodies have different processes. The senior manager of each specialist area within the Coram Group will be able to provide advice on how to proceed and the relevant contact details. In some circumstances the complainant may contact the regulatory body at any stage to make a complaint.

Relevant statutory/regulatory bodies might include:

- Ofsted
- IRM
- The Charity Commission
- The Fundraising Regulator
- The Advertising Standards Authority
- Social Work England

5.0 Anonymous Complaints

You can make an anonymous complaint by sending an anonymous letter for the attention of the Group Head of Quality and Safeguarding using the complaints@coram.org.uk email or the address detailed in section 4.2.

The decision to investigate an anonymous complaint will be taken by the CEO in consultation with the Group Head of Quality and Safeguarding, according to the type of complaint and the seriousness.

All anonymous complaints relating to children will be investigated and acted on immediately

6.0 Legal Liability and Claims for Compensation

Where you are requesting financial compensation, then your complaint will be passed to the CEO of the Coram Group immediately who may seek legal advice.

Appendix A – Complaint Form

COMPLAINT FORM

Your experiences help us to improve our services and learn from our mistakes. If something does go wrong we need to be able to put it right quickly and take action to ensure that it doesn't happen again. Please help us to improve the service you receive by completing this form, or getting someone you trust to complete it on your behalf. Please continue your answers on a separate sheet if there is not enough space on this form.

1. Your contact details

Your name:	
Your address:	
Your telephone number:	
Your email address:	

2. Your complaint

Name of service complained against:	
What do you think the service did wrong or did not do?	
How have you been affected by the service's actions?	

On what date were you first aware of the matter you are complaining about?	
Have you previously complained to the service about this issue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
a) To whom did you complain?	
b) When did you complain?	
c) Was your complaint in writing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
d) Have you received a written reply? (*If yes, please enclose a copy of the reply with this form).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes* <input type="checkbox"/> No
3. Proposed resolution	
What should the service do to put things right?	
5. Complainant's Signature	
If you have any documents to support your complaint please send these to us with this form. To be signed by the person making the complaint:	
Signature:	Date:

When you have filled in this form, fax or email it to service concerned or post or drop it in to the Coram Group Head Quality and Safeguarding , 41 Brunswick Square, London, WC1N 1AZ.
Email: complaints@coram.org.uk