

Cognus Complaints Policy

General

- 1 Cognus is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone we deal with, and we expect staff to act in accordance with our company values (appendix 2). In order to understand how well we do this we need to know when we get things wrong.
- 2 Feedback will be used with staff and services as a tool to recognise good practice, and to improve processes and services. We also welcome all other comments and suggestions that may improve aspects of our service.
- 3 Our Customer Service Standards can be found on our [website](#).
- 4 We treat as a complaint, any notified dissatisfaction with our service, which calls for a response. This can be:
 - the standard of service we provide
 - the behaviour of our staff
 - any action or lack of action by staff negatively affecting someone
 - failure to follow procedures or policies
 - failure to take into account relevant matters in a decision (subject to paragraph 6 below)
- 5 There may be matters that are not dealt with as a complaint; this will normally be where there are different ways to resolve things, such as school admission appeals and SEN Tribunals. If this is the case, we will inform you of where your complaint or appeal should be raised.
- 6 Service users are asked to try and initially resolve concerns informally with the relevant service and lead caseworker/staff, prior to lodging a formal complaint.
- 7 You can provide feedback through an online form which can be found at [Feedback and Complaints – Cognus](#).
- 8 If you need help in resolving matters you may contact the following organisations:

If your child has special educational needs or a disability:

[Sutton Information, Advice and Support Service](#) by email at sutton@siass.co.uk or telephone 020 8323 0462

[Sutton Parent Carer Forum](#) by email at suttonparentsforum@outlook.com or telephone 07557 760328

If you do not wish to use the above services, or the matter is not for SEND related services:

feedback@cognus.org.uk leaving a contact number, and someone will call you to discuss and assist

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You can also ask your local [Councillor](#) or [Member of Parliament](#) to help you

- 9 Where it has not been possible to resolve this informally in this way, the following complaints procedure may be used. If you ask someone to raise a complaint on your behalf, they will need your written consent to do so.
- 10 Complaints to senior Cognus officers or Local Authority officers relating to Cognus services may be referred to this complaints process for a response.
- 11 Complaints, together with associated themes and learning point actions, will be monitored by the London Borough of Sutton and the Cognus Board.

Complaints Process (see also flowchart at Appendix 1)

- 12 We provide an online form for complaints, which can be found at [Feedback and Complaints – Cognus](#)
- 13 To help us fully understand the complaint and how we can help resolve it, please include the following information:
 - your details
 - your child's details (where relevant)
 - what you are complaining about (i.e. where there have been service failures)
 - how you have tried to resolve matters with the service informally
 - what you would like to see as the outcome
 - any relevant evidence to support your complaint
 - any particular communication needs or preferences you may have
- 14 We may need to contact you for more information before investigating your complaint.
- 15 Complaints will follow the following process
 - Stage 1 – Service review and response
 - Stage 2 – Investigation by Head of Service or Services Director
 - Stage 3 – Review by Managing Director
 - In some circumstances, the right to refer to the Local Government Ombudsman will be offered, depending on the service involved and type of complaint
- 16 **Stage 1**

The service relating to the complaint will investigate the concerns and respond; this will be with the oversight of the service manager, and senior officers depending on the nature of the complaint. If the service recognises a fault, they will ensure this is put right. You will normally expect a response within 10 working days.

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17 **Stage 2**

If you do not agree with the outcome of the complaint or are unhappy with the steps to resolve the complaint, your case can be reviewed and investigated by the Head of Service or Services Director. It is important to specify what aspects of the Stage 1 outcome you are dissatisfied with, why, and what remedy you are seeking to ensure a full response can be given. A response will normally be issued within 20 working days.

18 **Stage 3**

If you remain dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response, you may ask for the complaint to be reviewed by the Managing Director. Again, you should specify what aspects of the previous response you are dissatisfied with and why. A response will normally be issued within 15 working days of the complaint being lodged.

19 Stage 3 complaints will be shared with the London Borough of Sutton who may provide input to the response. Cognus may also determine complaints at other stages warrant the same input or sharing.

20 Following Stage 3, complainants may have the right to refer their case to the Local Government Ombudsman, who can investigate matters relating to some services we provide on behalf of the London Borough of Sutton.

21 You may not bypass stages of the complaints procedure; i.e. Stage 1 must be considered before escalation to higher stages.

22 It is not normally possible to bring new areas of complaint into later stages of the process; if it is a new matter that requires investigation, this will be a fresh complaint at Stage 1 of the process. However, we aim to respond appropriately to all complaints at the earliest possible opportunity.

23 At any stage of the complaints process, we may contact you to discuss matters further, and this may include an invitation to a meeting. You may also contact and ask to meet with those investigating the complaint.

24 At all stages of the procedure, other Cognus staff may be utilised to assist in complaints handling.

25 Our standards for handling complaints

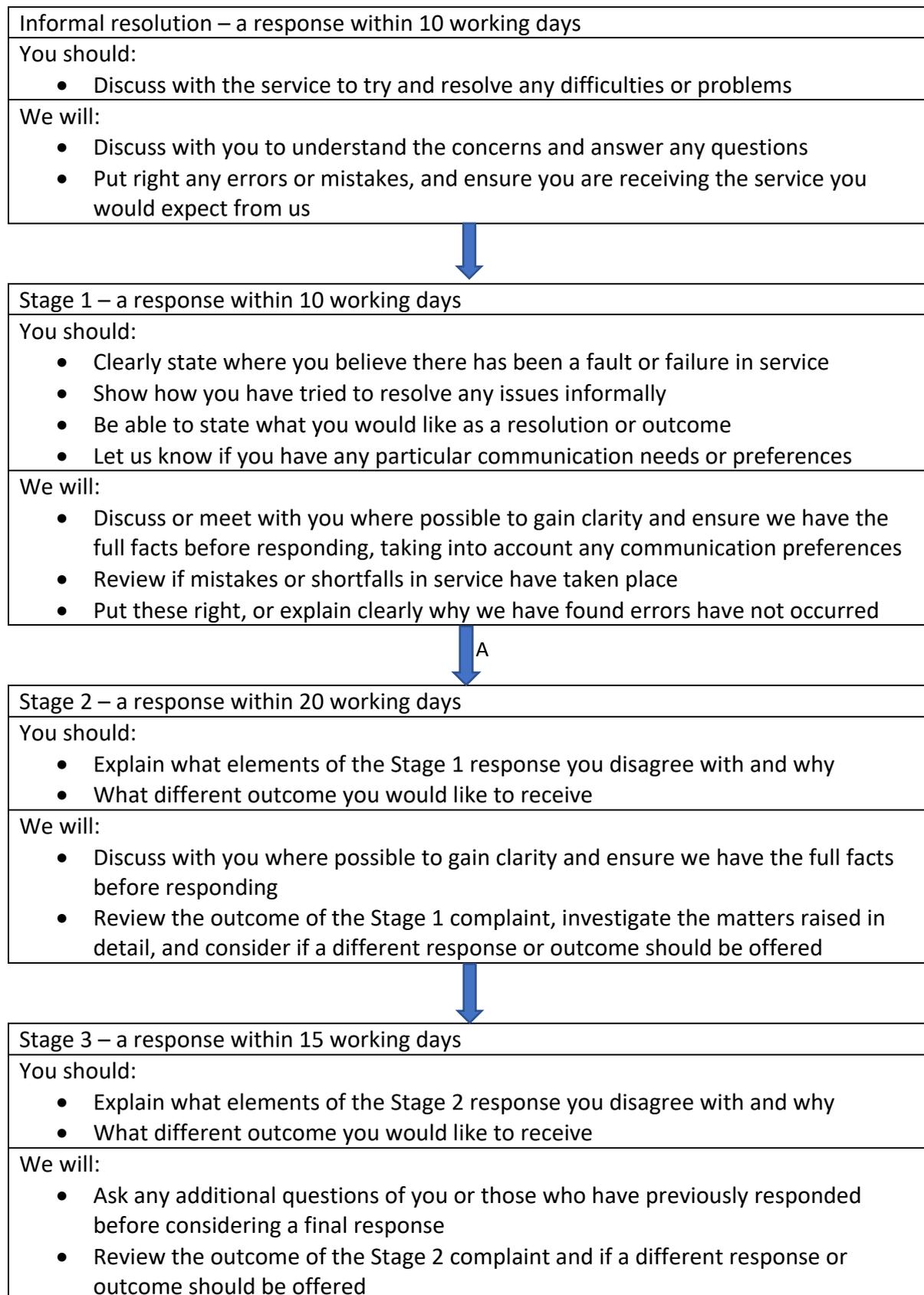
- complaints will be treated seriously and will be investigated
- you will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times
- we will be honest in our responses and not hide our faults
- we will aim to deal with your complaint within the stated deadlines; if these cannot be met we will contact you and let you know when you may receive a response

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- 26 Following any stage of the procedure, a complainant has a maximum of 1 calendar month from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.
- 27 We reserve the right to reject repeated complaints or those that are deliberately made to hinder or obstruct our services. We may also refer concerns through our 'Reasonable Behaviour' process, contained in our [Customer Service Standards Policy](#)
- 28 When we get things wrong, we will act to:
- accept responsibility
 - explain what went wrong and why
 - put things right by making any changes required
 - improve our processes and services
- 29 The action we take to put matters right in response to a complaint, can include any combination of the remedies set out in the list below
- an apology
 - an explanation of what went wrong and why
 - remedial action, which may include reviewing or changing a decision on the service given to an individual complainant
 - putting things right (for example change of procedures to prevent future difficulties of a similar kind, either for the complainant or others)
 - training or supervision of staff (but we will not inform you of any individual actions with staff members)
 - financial compensation (if there is evidence of financial loss due to our fault)

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Appendix 1 – Resolution and Complaints Process Flowchart:



Appendix 2 - Our Values:

