**Customer Service Standards Policy**

1. Cognus is committed to providing a high-quality, professional service to everyone that we deal with, and we expect staff to act in accordance with our company values (shown at Appendix 1).
2. Your feedback helps us to know what we’re doing well and what we need to do better, so we welcome all comments and suggestions that may improve our service.
3. For more information about providing feedback, please visit our [website](https://cognus.org.uk/contact-us/feedback/).
4. **What you should expect from us. We will;**

* Treat all those we work with fairly
* Be helpful, polite, respectful and show empathy
* Be honest, open and transparent
* Make written communications easy to understand, with any reasonable adjustments to support specific needs
* Explain service decisions clearly
* Answer your questions and give you guidance so that you know what to expect from us and our services
* Respond within time frames specified in this policy and keep you informed of any delays
* Follow statutory and internal processes and guidance correctly
* Maintain ongoing contact with you as necessary (e.g. keeping you informed of key changes that affect you)
* Apologise for our mistakes and put things right as soon as possible
* Request feedback from all those we work with and act on it to continuously improve our services
* Act according to our company values (appendix 1), ensuring our staff are aware of what is expected of them, and receive training and feedback through an appraisal process

1. **What we expect from you – you should:**

* Show the same courtesy and respect that you expect from us
* Let us know if you have any specific communication needs which we can share with our services, and what reasonable adjustments we can make to help you
* Be patient whilst we deal with your enquiries and await a response within the stated timescales
* Keep any arranged appointments, and let us know in advance if you are unable to attend or would like to reschedule
* Ensure you have an appointment before attending our office as we are unable to welcome visitors without a prior appointment booked
* Not record telephone calls or meetings
* Let us know how we can improve our services via our feedback channels
* Work in partnership with us to improve education services for children and young people

1. **Points of Contact:**

**Telephone** us on 020 8323 0450 (for general queries / requests / advice) between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Key Service telephone numbers can be found [here](https://cognus.org.uk/contact-us/)

**Email** us at [enquiries@cognus.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cognus.org.uk)

Writeto us at Cognus Limited, Cantium House, Railway Approach, Wallington, SM6 0DZ

Visitus at the same address to drop off any requested documents or letters; we are not a public caller office and will be unable to meet with you without a prior arranged appointment or by invite to meetings or training events. If you have any specific accessibilityneedsplease discuss these with the event/meeting organiser, and we will try and make reasonable adjustments

**Service Orders** from schools and other agencies will be processed within 7 days of receipt

**Freedom Of Information (FOI) requests should be logged with the London Borough of Sutton** using the following link:[Make a Freedom of Information (FOI) request - Sutton Council](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/w/make-a-freedom-of-information-foi-request?p_l_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dhow%2Bto%2Bmake%2Ban%2Bfoi)

**Subject Access Request (SAR) should be logged with the London Borough of Sutton** using the following link: [Make a Subject Access Request (SAR) - Sutton Council](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/w/make-a-subject-access-request-sar-?p_l_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dhow%2Bto%2Bmake%2Ba%2BSAR)

**Feedback** and **Complaints** through an online form [here](https://www.cognus.org.uk/contact-us/feedback/)

**Your personal information** will be protected. Our privacy notice can be found [here](https://cognus.org.uk/privacy/)

1. **Contacting Cognus:**

* Cognus will be contactable Monday to Friday during normal business hours of 9am to 5pm; this means:
  + Our main telephone number and [enquiries@cognus.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cognus.org.uk) email address will be answered during these times only, but messages left will be picked up the following working day
  + Requests through our main telephone and email channels will be directed to the correct teams to respond, if a response cannot be given directly
* Staff will be available during their normal working hours. If an individual member of staff is unavailable due to meetings, absence or working pattern (e.g. part-time or term-time):
  + Telephones will be redirected or a voicemail may be left
  + Emails will have an out of office message giving an alternative contact for urgent contact, and stating when the member of staff will return to work if known
  + Staff will include any non-standard working pattern in their email signature
  + Occasionally, our staff may send emails outside normal working hours; however, they may not be available to take calls in response
* We aim to respond to voicemails, emails and letters within 3 working days unless otherwise stated. This may be by acknowledgement if the query is complex or you are requesting a lot of information, but you should then be informed of when to expect a response, and this will normally be no later than 10 working days of the original enquiry
  + If, in exceptional circumstances, something will take longer than expected, we will keep you informed of progress
  + Please do not send follow-up emails unless the indicated time period has elapsed
  + We may not copy external parties into communications unless you specifically request us to do so; this may mean you need to send them communications or letters from us

1. **Communicating with advocates:**

* If you ask someone to contact us on your behalf, please provide them with your written consent as we will need this when they contact us. We need to ensure we are acting within data protection laws and principles (General Data Protection Regulations, or GDPR). This means:
  + We will not communicate with them if this consent is not current or was gained for a specific enquiry
  + We will not automatically copy them into communications with you unless in response to an email where they have been included; this means you may need to send them communications or letters from us
* Where a parent/carer requests information relating to an individual aged 18 and over, written consent from the individual will need to be obtained

1. **Communications Preferences:**

* If you have specific communications needs, please email [feedback@cognus.org.uk](mailto:feedback@cognus.org.uk) or call 020 8323 0450 so that your request can be coordinated and considered. We aim to meet all reasonable requests
* Where requests are agreed, our pupil database will have an alert placed on it which can be viewed by staff accessing records. We will use our best endeavours to act in accordance with preferences but there may be occasions where the preferred method of communication may not be followed
* All external-bound emails that include personal data will be sent from Cognus via Egress security software for data protection purposes

1. **Meeting With Staff**

* We expect all parties meeting with staff (whether it is in person or online), to conduct themselves appropriately and treat everybody with respect. We will not tolerate physical, verbal, threatening or abusive behaviour, and meetings will be terminated if these standards are not adhered to
* If meetings take place at Cognus’ offices with similar threatening or abusive behaviour, Cognus reserves the right to ask visitors to leave the premises
* We do not consent to the recording of any meetings nor for any covert recording or extract to be shared, or published on any external platform. Cognus may make notes and take actions to be circulated as the official record of meetings
* Families may bring observers to meetings with prior consent; observers may not participate in the meeting (with the exception of interpreters)

1. **Unreasonable Behaviour & Conduct**

* Where someone is in communication with our services, we expect our staff to be treated respectfully and fairly, and we will take action to protect staff from unreasonable behaviours aimed at them. These may include;
  + Threatening or abusive behaviour, whether this is in verbal or written communications, or physical actions
  + Excessive or persistent communications
  + Making unreasonable demands
  + Making unsubstantiated allegations
* Where we believe unreasonable behaviour or conduct has been displayed, we will;
  + Issue a warning about future behaviour
  + Limit communication channels (frequency of responses/updates, and points of contact)
  + Notify other relevant authorities, for example, Council officers and Police, depending on the severity of the behaviour
    - Should such measures be necessary, we will notify you in writing of this

1. **Feedback & Complaints:**

* Where staff have provided excellent service we would love to hear about it. Please let us know so that we can share this with staff
* If you have not been happy with our service, we want to listen. It is important that you tell us about this so that we can put things right for you and those we work with in the future
* If you have a complaint about a service fault or member of staff, please use our complaints policy below
* Our Feedback & Complaints Policy can be found on our [website](https://cognus.org.uk/contact-us/feedback/)

**Appendix 1 - Our Values:**

