STEP IN SUPPORT SERVICES

Complaints, Concerns & Whistleblowing Policy

Supporting Reintegration Every Step of the Year

Policy owner	Step In Support Services Directors
Approved by	Directors
Version	1.0
Effective from	October 2026
Review due	October 2027 or earlier if guidance/legislation changes

1. Purpose and scope

Step In welcomes feedback and aims to resolve concerns promptly, fairly and transparently. Children and families should be able to complain without fear that support will be withdrawn or that they will be treated less favourably.

This policy applies to all Step In directors, employees, sessional practitioners, associates, volunteers and contractors. It applies to work delivered in schools, homes, community venues, online where agreed, and other off-site locations.

Step In supports young people aged 11-18 through bespoke reintegration programmes combining attendance and engagement work, therapeutic/wellbeing support, educational support, social and personal development, family liaison and multi-agency working.

2. What can be raised

- Quality or conduct of support.
- Communication, reliability or professionalism.
- Equality, accessibility or boundaries.
- Data protection/confidentiality concerns.
- Safeguarding practice.
- Billing/commissioning concerns.
- Concerns about wrongdoing or unsafe organisational practice.

3. Complaints process

1. Stage 1 - Informal resolution: raise the issue with the practitioner or service lead where appropriate. Aim to acknowledge within 2 working days and resolve promptly.
2. Stage 2 - Formal complaint: submit to info@stepinsupportservices.org. A director not directly involved should investigate where possible, provide an acknowledgement and issue a written outcome normally within 10 working days.
3. Stage 3 - Review: where the complainant remains dissatisfied, request a review by another director/independent person where available. The review will consider whether the process and outcome were reasonable and identify any further action.

Where a school or local authority commissions the service, the complainant may also use the commissioner's complaints/escalation arrangements where applicable.

4. Safeguarding concerns are not ordinary complaints

A concern that a child is at risk, or an allegation about a practitioner, will be managed immediately under safeguarding procedures and may be referred to the LADO, children's social care or police. The complaints timetable will not delay safeguarding action.

5. Whistleblowing

Workers should raise genuine concerns about unsafe, unlawful or unethical practice with a director who is not implicated. If internal reporting is inappropriate or ineffective, concerns may be raised with an appropriate external body. Safeguarding whistleblowing concerns may also be raised through recognised external safeguarding routes.

6. Learning from complaints

Complaints and concerns will be logged, reviewed for themes and used to improve policy, training and service delivery. Personal information will be restricted to those who need it.