



# Horserenity CIC

## Complaints Procedure

**Date of Issue:** 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025

**Review Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> December 2026

### 1. Introduction

Horserenity CIC aims to provide a safe, supportive, and high-quality environment for all learners. We recognise that concerns or complaints may arise and believe that addressing them fairly, promptly, and transparently strengthens our services and relationships.

This procedure explains how complaints can be raised, how they will be handled, and the steps available if someone is dissatisfied with the outcome. It is suitable for children, young people, parents/carers, social workers, referrers, and members of the public.

### 2. Purpose

The aims of this procedure are to:

- Provide a clear and accessible process for raising concerns or complaints.
- Treat all complaints seriously, sensitively, and impartially.
- Resolve concerns as quickly as possible.
- Protect children and young adults by ensuring concerns related to safeguarding or welfare are handled appropriately.
- Ensure learning and service improvement through feedback.

### 3. Scope

This procedure applies to:

- Learners
- Parents and carers
- Social workers and other professionals
- Staff, volunteers, and directors
- Members of the local community

Complaints may relate to:

- Service delivery or quality
- Staff or volunteer behaviour
- Communication or administration
- Health and safety matters
- Inclusion, accessibility, or discrimination
- Concerns raised by or involving children and young adults

**Safeguarding concerns must not be handled as complaints**—they must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

## 4. Principles

Horserenity CIC will ensure that:

- Complaints are taken seriously and handled respectfully.
- Complainants are not disadvantaged or discriminated against.
- Children and young people are supported to express concerns in a safe way.
- Complaints are handled by appropriate individuals to avoid conflict of interest.
- Outcomes are evidence-based and transparent.
- Where possible, mediation or early resolution is sought.

## 5. Types of Feedback

We recognise three categories:

### 5.1 Comments

General feedback or suggestions to improve practice.

### 5.2 Concerns

Issues raised informally that can often be resolved quickly.

### 5.3 Complaints

Issues requiring a formal investigation, written response, or escalation.

# 6. Raising a Concern or Complaint

Horserenity CIC encourages concerns to be raised as early as possible to prevent escalation.

## 6.1 Children and Young People

Learners can make a complaint verbally to any trusted staff member. Staff must:

- Listen without judgement
- Reassure the learner
- Record the concern in writing
- Pass the information to their line manager or the DSL (if safeguarding-related)

## 6.2 Parents, Carers, Professionals

Concerns can be raised:

- Verbally
- By phone
- By email
- In writing
- Via a representative (e.g., social worker)

Contact details:

**General Contact:** [dan@horserenity.co.uk](mailto:dan@horserenity.co.uk) 07887 642428

**Manager / Complaints Lead:** [sarah@horserenity.co.uk](mailto:sarah@horserenity.co.uk) 07734 058783

# 7. Complaints Procedure Stages

## Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, complaints should be addressed informally first.

- A staff member or manager will discuss the concern.
- Most issues can be resolved within **5 working days**.
- A record will be kept of the discussion and outcome.

If unresolved, or if the complainant wishes to proceed formally, the complaint moves to Stage 2.

## Stage 2: Formal Complaint

A formal complaint must be put in writing (support can be provided if needed).

## What should be included?

- Name and contact details
- Details of the complaint
- Relevant dates, people involved, or evidence
- Desired outcome (if any)

## Procedure

1. **Acknowledgment** of complaint within **5 working days**.
2. **Investigation** by the Centre Manager or a designated senior individual not involved in the incident.
  - Interviews may be held with staff, volunteers, or witnesses.
  - Evidence will be reviewed.
3. **Outcome Letter** sent within **20 working days**, including:
  - Findings
  - Actions to be taken
  - Any learning or service improvements

If the complaint concerns the Manager, the investigation will be led by a Trustee.

If unsatisfied, the complainant may escalate to Stage 3.

### Stage 3: Review by the Board of Directors

The complainant may request a review by the Board.

## Procedure

1. Request must be submitted within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.
2. A panel of at least **two Directors** not previously involved will conduct a review.
3. The panel may:
  - Meet with the complainant
  - Seek additional information
  - Review the investigation process
4. A written response will be issued within **20 working days**.

This is the final internal stage.

## 8. External Escalation

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may contact relevant external bodies, for example:

- **Local Authority** (for concerns about commissioned services or safeguarding)
- **Companies House** (governance concerns, financial misconduct)
- **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** (if staff conduct suggests risk to children/vulnerable adults)
- **Health & Safety Executive (HSE)** (serious safety concerns)

- **Ofsted or ISI** (if complaint relates to a school placing children at the centre)

Information will be provided upon request.

## 9. Safeguarding Concerns

Any complaint that includes:

- Allegations of abuse
- Welfare concerns
- Unsafe practice
- Staff conduct risking harm

must be referred **immediately** to the DSL and managed under safeguarding procedures, not the complaints procedure.

Horserenity CIC will follow statutory guidance including:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Local Safeguarding Partnerships
- DBS referral requirements

## 10. Support for Children and Young People

Children and young people may require help to express a concern or complaint.

Horserenity CIC will:

- Provide age-appropriate explanations
- Offer help recording the complaint
- Allow involvement of a parent/carer, advocate, or social worker
- Ensure no retaliation or negative treatment follows a complaint

## 11. Record Keeping

Horserenity CIC will maintain confidential records of:

- All complaints
- Actions taken
- Outcomes
- Correspondence
- Learning identified

Records will be:

- Stored securely
- Accessible only to authorised staff
- Retained in line with data protection and retention policies

## 12. Learning and Improvement

Findings from complaints will be used to:

- Improve service delivery
- Strengthen safeguarding practice
- Support staff training and development
- Identify patterns or concerns requiring organisational change

Anonymised data may be included in reports for the Board of Directors.

## 13. Unreasonable or Persistent Complaints

Rarely, complaints may become unreasonable or vexatious. Horserenity CIC may:

- Set boundaries for communication
- Limit further investigation
- Involve external support agencies

This will be decided on a case-by-case basis and communicated in writing.

## 14. Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled with full respect for privacy.

Information will only be shared:

- On a need-to-know basis
- With consent where appropriate
- Without consent where safeguarding or legal obligations require it

## 15. Policy Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation or statutory guidance changes
- Complaints reveal a need to update practice
- Trustees or safeguarding audits require modifications