COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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1. Our Commitment

1.1. Molly's Gift are committed to building trusting relationships with families, children, staff and the wider community. We know that sometimes things can go wrong, and when they do, we are ready to listen, learn and put things right.

1.2. This policy sets out how to raise a concern or complaint, and how we will respond fairly, respectfully and in line with our values of respect, integrity, courage, empathy, self-discipline, and gratitude.

2. Key Principles

2.1. We aim for our Complaints Procedure to:

- Be easy to understand and use.
- Be fair and open-minded.
- Focus on resolving concerns, not placing blame.
- Be respectful and confidential where needed.
- Help us improve through honest feedback.

3. Who can make a Complaint?

3.1. Anyone can raise a concern or complaint about services provided by one of our camps– this includes parents, carers, children and young people, staff, volunteers and members of the public.

3.2. We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, Molly' Gift will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

4. Concerns and Complaints

4.1. What is the difference between a concern and a complaint?

- A **concern** is when something doesn't feel right, and you want to talk about it or seek clarification.
- A **complaint** is when you believe something has gone wrong and want action or change.

4.2. We aim to resolve most issues informally as early as possible. If this isn't possible, we will use this formal Complaints Procedure.

5. Complaints not covered by this Procedure

5.1. Whilst most complaints will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure, some matters must be dealt with under separate statutory procedures – please check for details in the table below. Otherwise, follow this Complaints Procedure.

Type of complaint	Who to contact
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Whistleblowing	Molly's Gift has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.

	Volunteer staff who have concerns about our camp should complain through this complaints procedure.

5.2. If other bodies are investigating aspects of your complaint, for example, the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to keep to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

5.3. If you commence legal action against the camps in relation to your complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the Complaints Procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

6. How to make a Complaint: Our Three-Stage Process

6.1. It is important that you follow the steps set out in this procedure and give as much information about the nature of the complaint and how you would like it to be resolved. Please do not approach individuals to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to consider complaints on an individual basis and will refer your complaint back to the correct stage of the Complaints Procedure.

6.2. We have a clear and simple structure to hear and respond to complaints:

Stage	What you do	Who responds	What happens	Outcome & next steps
Stage 1 – Informal Complaint	Call or speak with a camp leader on the day. Explain what the issue is and how you hope the situation could be resolved.	An appropriate member of staff will arrange a meeting or speak to you about your complaint.	Informal resolution will be discussed through a conversation or meeting with a staff member.	An informal written response will be sent to you. If you are not satisfied, you can submit a Stage 2 complaint.
Stage 2 – Formal Complaint	Email your complaint, ideally using Form A (at end of this document). If you would like assistance completing the form, please ask the SEND lead for camp.	Your complaint will be investigated by a senior person who has no previous involvement in the matter (see table below which explains who).	There will be a formal investigation into the issues you have raised.	A formal written outcome will be sent to you. If you are not satisfied, you can submit a Stage 3 complaint.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing	Email your complaint, ideally using Form A (at end of this document). If you would like assistance completing the form, please ask the SEND lead at camp.	A panel of two trustees who have no previous involvement in the matter.	A meeting will be held for the panel to hear your complaint. The panel will decide whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint.	A formal written outcome will be sent to you after the meeting. If you are not satisfied with the response, you can contact the Department for Education (DfE).

6.3. **Stage 1: Informal Complaint**

We encourage open and early conversations and hope to reserve any concerns without the need for you to submit a formal complaint. At Stage 1, you can:

- Speak to the camp lead on the day.
- Request a meeting in person or by phone.
- Raise your concern calmly and clearly.
- Explain how you hope the situation could be resolved.

We will:

- Listen carefully and take notes.
- Try to resolve things quickly and informally.
- Share next steps and check whether you are satisfied.
- Send you an informal response in writing, normally within 10 camp days of you contacting the campl, so everyone is clear what has been agreed.
- We will give a realistic time frame and suggest a follow up conversation to see if you are satisfied with our action. In some cases, time will be needed to make agreed changes or adaptations.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 (Informal Complaint), you may go to Stage 2 (Formal Complaint).

6.4. **Stage 2: Formal Complaint** To begin this stage:

- It is helpful if you complete the Complaints Form (**Appendix A**) as this provides information we need. If you choose to send an email explaining your complaint instead, please try to include all the information we ask for on the form. Send your Stage 2 complaint to info@mollysgift.com
- Include the written response you received to your Stage 1 (Informal Complaint) and explain why you are not satisfied with the response.
- A Stage 2 complaint must be in writing, unless you have reason to request that a reasonable adjustment be made to amend this.

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- Who investigates your complaint:

If your complaint is about	Who investigates / responds
Camp staff member – activity lead/activity assistant	Camp Lead or Safeguarding Camp Lead
Volunteer	Camp Lead or Safeguarding Camp Lead
Camp staff member identified as a 1-1	SEND camp Lead
Camp Lead	Safeguarding Camp Lead
SEND camp lead/Safeguarding lead	Leandra Welband

What happens:

- Your complaint will be acknowledged within **5 camp days**.
- The person investigating (see table above) will:
- ○ Investigate fairly and impartially.
- ○ Gather any relevant information or documents.
- ○ If necessary, interview those involved (see 'meeting guidance' below).
- Write to you with their findings and any actions to be taken – usually within **20 camp days** of Molly's Gift acknowledging your complaint.

Meeting guidance:

- Anyone who is interviewed as part of a complaint investigation may bring a friend, relative, or advocate.
- We do not advise that legal representation is brought to the meeting, because this can escalate the situation and the purpose is to find a solution, not create further distress for all involved.
- We ask everyone to remain calm, constructive and respectful.
- Notes will be taken and shared with the interviewee for agreement.
- Molly's Gift may use digital transcription to take meeting notes. The transcription will only be used to create the meeting notes, and the transcription will be deleted after the meeting notes have been agreed by the interviewee. No other audio or video recording is permitted unless to meet a reasonable adjustment.
- Interview notes are kept confidential to preserve confidentiality and an individual's rights to privacy.

6.5. **Stage 3: Panel Hearing**

This is the final stage of our Complaints Procedure. You may request this stage if you are dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome. To submit a Stage 3 complaint:

- If you wish to submit a Stage 3 complaint, you must do so within 10 camp days of the Stage 2 decision. Complaints received outside this time will be rejected unless exceptional circumstances apply.

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- It is helpful if you complete the Complaints Form **(Appendix A)** as this provides information we need. If you choose to send an email explaining your complaint instead, please try to include all the information we ask for on the form. Send your Stage 3 complaint to **info@mollygift.com**
- Include the written response you received to your Stage 2 (Formal Complaint) and explain why you are not satisfied with the response.
- A Stage 3 complaint must be in writing, unless you have reason to request that a reasonable adjustment be made to amend this.

What happens:

- Your complaint will be acknowledged within **5 camp days**.
- Molly's Gift will appoint a Clerk to the panel. The Clerk will:
    - Form a panel made up of two people with no previous involvement in the matter. One of the panel members will be independent of the management and running of Molly's Gift.
    - Arrange a date for the meeting (we will aim to hold the meeting within **20 camp days** of acknowledging your Stage 3 complaint).
    - Share a pack of documents from both parties **5 camp days** before the meeting.
    - Explain your right to be accompanied by a friend or supporter.
- If you cannot agree a date for the meeting after three dates are proposed, it may be necessary to hold the meeting without you present. This is to ensure that any concerns can be considered and addressed promptly.

At the hearing:

- The Chair of the panel will welcome everyone and explain the process.
- You will be invited to explain your complaint and why you are not satisfied with the Stage 2 outcome.
- The camp representative will respond to your complaint.
- Panel members may ask questions.
- Everyone will be treated with dignity and fairness.
- No new complaints can be raised at this stage.
- Audio or video recording is not permitted unless to meet a reasonable adjustment.
- The meeting will be held in private.

After hearing from all parties, the panel will meet in private to make their decision. The panel may:

- Uphold your complaint in whole or in part.
- Dismiss your complaint in whole or in part.

If your complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve your complaint.

- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the camp's systems or procedures to prevent similar circumstances occurring again.

You will be sent a written decision normally with **10 camp days** of the hearing. The response will detail:

- Any actions taken to investigate the complaint.
- A full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it.
- Any actions that will be taken to resolve the complaint.
- Details of how to contact the Department for Education (DfE) if you are dissatisfied with how the complaint has been handled.

7. Timescales and Timeframes

7.1. Complaints must usually be made within 3 months of the issue being complained about.

7.2. All timescales given are in camp days. Complaints received outside of termtime will be processed when the camp re-opens.

7.3. We will endeavour to respond to complaints with the timescales stated in this policy. However, should there be a delay, for example if a member of staff is absent or there are complex matters requiring a longer investigation, we will let you know in writing giving a realistic timeframe.

7.4. We do not want to delay the process because we aim to resolve the matter for you and the camp as soon as possible.

8. Expectations for Communication and Behaviour

8.1. We will always treat you with respect and courtesy – and ask the same in return.

8.2. We will understand that making a complaint can feel emotional. We will remain calm and open and ask that complainants:

- Avoid raised voices or accusatory language.
- Stick to the facts and share concerns clearly.
- Show mutual respect in meetings and communication.

8.3. **Vexatious or Frivolous Complaints**

Some complaints may be considered to be 'vexatious' or 'frivolous'. Examples of this are:

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
- Insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
- Insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
- Demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.
- Unacceptable behaviour (abusive language, repeated demands, or aggression).

We will consider all complaints that are made under this Complaints Procedure, however, if behaviour becomes unacceptable behaviour (abusive language, repeated demands, or aggression) we may restrict communications. Examples of this are:

- Limit communication to one named staff member.
- Limiting phone calls, e.g. one per week at a set time.
- Requiring written communication only.
- No in-person contact without an agreed appointment.
- In serious cases: temporary or permanent restriction from camp premises or contact the police.

8.4. **Serial and Persistent Complaints**

We will do our best to be helpful to people who contact us with:

- A complaint or concern.
- A request for information.

However, there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, you may remain dissatisfied. If you try to re-open the same issue, we will inform you that the procedure has been completed and the matter is now closed. If you contact us again

on the same issue, we may view it as 'serial' or 'persistent' and choose not to respond. We will only do this if the Complaints Procedure has been completed.

9. Complaint Campaigns

9.1. Molly's Gift may follow a different procedure if it becomes the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints that are:

- All based on the same subject.
- From complainants unconnected with the camp.

This could include:

- Sending a template response to all complainants.
- Publishing a single response on the camp's website.

10. Withdrawing a Complaint

10.1. You can withdraw your complaint at any stage. Please confirm this in writing.

11. How we will try to Resolve

11.1. If a complaint is upheld, we may:

- Offer an explanation.
- Apologise sincerely.
- Take steps to put things right.
- Review procedures, training or communication.

12. Record Keeping

12.1. Molly's Gift will keep a written record of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at a preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

13. Summary – Wanting to Improve

13.1. At Molly's Gift, we approach complaints not as problems to manage but as opportunities to reflect, restore and grow. Thank you for helping us remain accountable to our vision of creating a chance for everyone to smile.

Appendix A

Complaints Form – Stage 2 (Formal Complaint) and Stage 3 (Panel Review)

Please complete the complaint stages in order (1, 2, 3) as we may not be able to consider a complaint that has missed any stages. If you would like any assistance, please contact the camp office.

WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS FORM, PLEASE SEND IT TO info@mollygift.com

IF THIS IS A STAGE 2 COMPLAINT:

Have you completed Stage 1 of our process?	YES/NO	If no, please explain why
Have you attached a letter from the camp explaining the Stage 1 outcome?	YES/NO	If no, please explain why

IF THIS IS A STAGE 3 COMPLAINT:

Have you completed Stage 2 of our process?	YES/NO	If no, please explain why
Have you attached a letter from the camp explaining the Stage 2 outcome?	YES/NO	If no, please explain why

DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT:

Your name	
The child or young person's name (if relevant)	
Your relationship to the child or young person	
What is the best phone number to contact you?	
Email address	
Address	

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Please give details of your complaint. The questions below may help you in completing the form. Please include all information you think is relevant.

Who have you spoken to already about your complaint?

What happened?

What do you think has not been resolved?

What would resolve the matter for you?

Please continue on another sheet if needed.