



**Cuidiú**  
Caring Support for Parenthood

## **Complaints Management Policy**

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## Introduction

Cuidiú's motto is 'Education and Support for Parenthood'. Our aim is provide support and education to parents for parenthood. We empower parents by providing them with knowledge and support to make informed choices through all stages of parenthood from pregnancy to early childhood and teenage years. This support is provided through childbirth education, postnatal support, breastfeeding support and parent to parent support delivered through one to one support, support groups, educational talks and family-oriented activities such as parties and outings.

## Policy Statement

Cuidiú is fully committed to providing quality supports and services to all who choose to use our services. We recognise that from time to time the supports or services provided may fall short of what is expected. Cuidiú is committed to learning from complaints and to using this learning to inform organisational planning and development as well as the improvement of the services and supports provided.

The Complaints Management process will be fair, transparent, and impartial; and the complaints handling process will be implemented without fear, favour, or prejudice towards the complainant, or the person, or service about which the complaint was made.

## Purpose

The aim of this policy is to outline how someone using Cuidiú's supports and services can make a complaint and to ensure that any complaints received are dealt with in a fair way and to the satisfaction of the complainant where at all possible. The associated procedures for our Volunteers, Tutors, Legal Members and Board give clear direction on the management of complaints.

## Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all Volunteers, Tutors, Members and to the members of the Board of Directors. For purposes of clarity Members here as defined as legal members of the company and not as ordinary 'Family Members' of Cuidiú. Volunteers and Tutors are

those who act as Breastfeeding Counsellors and Tutors, Antenatal Teachers and Tutors, Parent2Parent Supporters and Tutors and those who undertake leadership/organisational roles in Cuidiú activities.

Any person who has received, is currently receiving, or seeking a service or support from Cuidiú can make a complaint. Complaints may also be received from members of the general public in relation to the services or supports provided by Cuidiú, its Volunteers, Tutors, Members or Board of Directors.

A complaint may be made about Cuidiú's administrative practices or it may be made where a person believes that the standards of support or practice provided by one of our Volunteers falls short of what is acceptable.

Some categories of complaint cannot be dealt with by this procedure;

- Any allegation or concern about abuse of a child must follow Cuidiú's Child Protection Policy and in all such instances our Volunteers, Tutors, Members and Board must adhere to this.
- Complaints about the conduct of a Volunteer, Tutor, Member or Board member in their private lives outside of their volunteering role does not fall under the scope of this policy.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Cuidiú requires all Volunteers, Tutors, Members and the Board to be familiar with this document and to respond to complaints in line with the procedures in this document when they are raised with them. The Chair of the Administrative Council holds a particular responsibility to ensure that they process complaints that are referred to them in accordance with this policy and associated procedures,

## Management of Complaints

### Definition of a Complaint

Any expression of dissatisfaction, whether oral or written, and whether justified or not, from or on behalf of an eligible complainant about Cuidiú's provision of, or failure to provide, its supports and services. A complaint may be made about Cuidiú's administrative practices where it is claimed these practices do not accord with fair or sound administrative practice, and adversely affects the person by whom, or on whose behalf, the complaint is made.

An action does not accord with fair and sound administrative practice if it is:

- taken without proper authority,
- taken on irrelevant grounds,
- the result of negligence or carelessness,
- based on erroneous or incomplete information,
- improperly discriminatory,
- based on undesirable administrative practice, or
- in any other respect contrary to fair or sound administration.

A complaint may also be made where a person believes that the standards of support or practice provided by one of our Volunteers (Breastfeeding Counsellors and Tutors, Antenatal Teachers and Tutors, Parent2Parent Supporters and Tutors and those who undertake leadership/organisational roles in Cuidiú activities) falls short of what is acceptable.

### Making a Complaint

It is not always easy to directly approach an individual with whom one might have a concern or a complaint. The person making the complaint may find it easier initially to approach another person within Cuidiú and ask their assistance in raising the issue with the person or service concerned. The person that is approached will assist the complainant to raise the issue causing them concern.

A complaint can be made in a number of ways including:

- In person
- By telephone
- By letter or by email

Wherever possible complainants are encouraged to provide sufficient details such as dates and locations when making a complaint to enable appropriate validation and investigation of that complaint.

### **Time Limits for Making a Complaint**

A complaint must be made within 12 months of the date of the action giving rise to the complaint, or within 12 months of the complainant becoming aware of the action giving rise to the complaint.

The Chairperson of the Administrative Council may extend the time limit for making a complaint if they are of the opinion that special circumstances make it appropriate to do so. These special circumstances may include but are not exclusive to the following:

- If the complainant is ill or bereaved.
- If new relevant, significant and verifiable information relating to the action becomes available to the complainant.
- If the complaint concerns an issue of such seriousness that it cannot be ignored.

The Chairperson of the Administrative Council must notify the complainant of a decision to extend/not extend time limits within 15 working days.

### **Acknowledgement of a Complaint**

Complaints being dealt with formally (Stage 3 Complaints) will be acknowledged within 15 working days (3 calendar weeks) and the person dealing with the complaint will outline to the complainant the steps to be taken in investigating the complaint and the time limits for the completion of the investigation.

As Cuidiú is a solely volunteer run organisation this time limit may need to be extended due to non-availability of the required personnel, alternatively the person dealing with the complaint may hand the matter to another volunteer with the requisite level of authority to deal with the matter. If the timeline is extended or the matter forwarded to another person then the complainant will be advised of this by telephone or email at the earliest opportunity.

## Anonymous Complaints and Complaints in Confidence

With the exception of a complaint which refers to the potential abuse of a child, Cuidiú will not investigate anonymous complaints made against any of its Volunteers, Tutors, Members or Board. If the complaint is made by phone or by person, the receiving the complaint should encourage the person to provide a name and contact details.

It will be assumed that complainants are happy for their identity to be made known to relevant parties unless they clearly express a desire to make a complaint in confidence i.e. do not wish for their name to be disclosed. If a complainant makes a complaint in confidence, the identity of the complainant will only be known to the recipient of the complaint, the Chairperson of the Administrative Council and in some cases the President of Cuidiú. If the investigation of the complaint requires the identity of the complainant to be disclosed, the consent of the complainant should be obtained to disclose this information. The complainant must be informed that failure to disclose the identity of the complainant may hinder a full and proper investigation of the complaint being carried out.

All anonymous complaints, both written and verbal, should be documented and brought to the attention of the Administrative Council and Board of Directors for a decision as to whether quality improvements are required on the basis of the complaint. Anonymous complaints must be reported to the Chair of the Administrative Council.

The Chair of the Administrative Council is responsible for identifying trends in any anonymous complaints and for providing this information to the Administrative Council and Board of Directors.

## Vexatious or Malicious Complaints

The complaints handling process will provide protection and support to a person or service where it is deemed that a complaint has been made without sufficient grounds or with the conscious desire to cause harm to that person or service. Complaints that are believed to be vexatious, malicious or frivolous will not be investigated.

Cuidiú views the making of a malicious or vexatious complaint against any Volunteer, Tutor, Legal Member or Board Member with the utmost seriousness and any such complaints, found to be potentially malicious or vexatious may be referred to An Garda Síochána.

## How to Make a Complaint

(To be placed on Cuidiú website.)

In Cuidiú we recognise that from time to time our administrative processes or the standards of support or practice provided by one of our Volunteers may fall short of what is acceptable. We are eager to address any of our shortcomings and welcome any feedback that may improve our support to you. A complaint can be made in person, by telephone or in writing/by email. A complaint must be made within 12 months of the date of the action giving rise to the complaint, or within 12 months of the complainant becoming aware of the action giving rise to the complaint.

If you wish to make a complaint the following steps should be followed;

### **Stage 1 – Local Resolution of a Complaint at the Point of Contact**

Wherever possible we encourage you to raise your concern locally with a local committee member, group / activity leader or other Volunteer. This allows for a prompt response to your concerns and a speedy resolution. If this is not successful in resolving your concern it can be escalated to Stage 2.

### **Stage 2 – Informal Resolution**

If Stage 1 is unsuccessful in resolving your concern you can raise it with the Chairperson of the Cuidiú Branch for your area (you can find contact details on [www.cuidiu.ie](http://www.cuidiu.ie)) or with the Chairperson of the relevant Sector i.e. Breastfeeding Support ([cuidiubreastfeedingpanel@gmail.com](mailto:cuidiubreastfeedingpanel@gmail.com)), Parent2Parent Support ([parentsupport@cuidiu.ie](mailto:parentsupport@cuidiu.ie)) or Antenatal Education ([antpanelchair@gmail.com](mailto:antpanelchair@gmail.com)). In instances where the concern relates to the Chairperson of a Cuidiú Branch it can be raised with the Branch Representative on the Administrative Council instead ([branchrep@cuidiu.ie](mailto:branchrep@cuidiu.ie)).

### **Stage 3 – Formal Investigation and Resolution**

Stage 3 should only be utilised when Stage 1 and Stage 2 have been exhausted. Stage 3 requires the matter to be escalated to the Chair of the Administrative Council for formal investigation and resolution. The Chair of the Administrative Council can be contacted at [chair@cuidiu.ie](mailto:chair@cuidiu.ie)