

# Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

## **Oakdale Group Head Office**

49 Valley Drive, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG2 0JH  
01423 503080, [dpo@oakdalecentre.org](mailto:dpo@oakdalecentre.org), [www.oakdalegroup.org](http://www.oakdalegroup.org)

If this document is required in another format such as large print, audio or another language please contact the Governance Team at [dpo@oakdalecentre.org](mailto:dpo@oakdalecentre.org)

## **Oakdale's Equality Impact Statement**

When following procedures on behalf of Oakdale, all employees and associates are expected to ensure that no one person or group is disadvantaged on the grounds of race, religion or beliefs, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, disability, pregnancy and maternity, caring responsibilities.

### **Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy**

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**Oakdale Group** includes: Oakdale Centre CIC, Oakdale Therapies Ltd, BUSS Model Ltd.

## Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines how clients/family members/external parties who interact with Oakdale can provide both positive and negative feedback, how that feedback is managed within the organisation, and the steps taken to ensure all feedback is taken seriously and acted on appropriately. It also details how feedback is regularly monitored and analysed to identify trends, inform improvements, and enhance overall service quality.

### This policy supports compliance with:

- CQC Regulation 16 - receiving and acting on complaints
- NHS Complaints Regulations 2009 - clear process, staged investigation and timeliness
- Ofsted inspection complaint guidelines - appeal rights and expectations for service quality.

## Responsibilities

### The Complainant

The complainant plays a key role in engaging with Oakdale's procedures and providing clear, timely, and accurate information. Cooperation is essential in helping Oakdale to ensure a fair and effective communication and/or resolution at each stage of this policy.

### Oakdale Colleagues

All Oakdale staff and colleagues are responsible for receiving, recording, and appropriately escalating any comments, compliments or complaints raised, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy. It is expected that all colleagues respond with professionalism, sensitivity, and in a timely manner to all feedback received.

### Oakdale Operational Leads

Oakdale Operational Leads will be the first point of contact when feedback is received that relates to their division. They will then liaise with Head(s) of Service and Clinical Lead(s), where required, to ensure an appropriate person investigates the feedback in line with this policy.

### The Investigating Officer

At Stage 2 of this policy, the Investigating Officer is responsible for gathering relevant facts, reviewing available evidence, and speaking with those involved where necessary. Their role is to ensure a fair and thorough investigation, and to present their findings clearly to inform the next steps in the process.

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## The Senior Management Team (SMT) Panel

At Stage 3, the Senior Management Team (SMT) Panel is tasked with conducting an impartial review of complaint investigation findings. The panel will consider all evidence presented, assess whether the policy has been followed correctly, and determine whether further action or resolution is required.

## The Board

The Board holds overall responsibility for the oversight of trends and patterns identified through comments, compliments and complaints. This information will be used to inform strategic decision making, and maintain oversight of service improvements.

## Oakdale's Safeguarding Champion

The Safeguarding Champion will be actively involved in reviewing any feedback that indicates a risk of, or actual, abuse.

## The Governance Team

The Governance Team will support all Oakdale divisions with the effective management of comments, compliments, and complaints. They will assist by ensuring all feedback is logged internally & responded to, that data is monitored regularly, and that reports are produced and shared appropriately. The Governance Team will also support any required auditing processes to ensure Oakdale's continuous improvement, transparency and accountability.

## Defined Terms

Please see a list of definitions below for terms used throughout this policy:

<b>Feedback</b>	Informal or formal expression of views which can be positive or negative i.e. a comment, compliment or complaint.
<b>Comment</b>	Suggestions or observations about services that may be positive or negative but don't necessarily require a direct response.
<b>Compliment</b>	Positive reflection of experience.
<b>Complaint</b>	Expression of dissatisfaction requiring formal attention and response.

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<b>Appeal</b>	Request for a complaint outcome to be reviewed at a higher level within the organisation.
<b>Complainant</b>	Person or party making the complaint.

## Guiding Principles

Oakdale's approach to handling comments, compliments and complaints is underpinned by the following guiding principles:

- 1. Accessibility** - Ensuring there are multiple ways to provide feedback
- 2. Transparency** - Effectively communicating the process, taking ownership and meeting prescribed timescales
- 3. Compassion** - Ensuring that all individuals are treated with respect, and their concerns are received openly and constructively
- 4. Equality** - Maintaining a non-discriminatory and culturally sensitive approach
- 5. Learning** - Remembering that every complaint drives service improvement

## Data Protection

In order to process feedback, personal data will be held about the individual who has submitted the information and those people addressed within the forms. This will be held securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and only used to help understand and investigate the feedback. The identity of the individual will only be made known to those who need to consider the information. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applies or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

## Procedures for Providing Feedback

### How to provide Feedback to Oakdale

At Oakdale, we recognise that individuals have different preferences and needs when it comes to providing feedback. To ensure everyone feels heard, a range of accessible and flexible options are available for sharing comments, compliments, or complaints. The aim of

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this is to facilitate a supportive environment where feedback can be given comfortably to Oakdale, whether in writing, in person, online, or through a representative.

<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:dpo@oakdalecentre.org">dpo@oakdalecentre.org</a>
<b>Post</b>	Oakdale Group Head Office, 49 Valley Drive, Harrogate, HG2 0JH
<b>Phone</b>	01423 503 080
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.oakdalegroup.org/contact-us/">https://www.oakdalegroup.org/contact-us/</a>
<b>At Oakdale Sites</b>	<b>Feedback Cards</b> are available in the waiting rooms and <b>Feedback Forms (Appendix B)</b> are available in the front offices. If you access appointments online or at a venue where there is no front office or waiting room, a form can be emailed to you on request.
<b>Client End of Service Questionnaire</b>	An electronic <b>Client End of Service Questionnaire</b> will be sent to your email once your therapy or assessment is completed.

## Compliments

Oakdale appreciates and welcomes compliments from clients/family members/external parties. Positive feedback about staff/colleagues, services, or overall experience not only boosts morale but also helps Oakdale to recognise and celebrate what is going well.

Compliments are anonymised and used by Oakdale as valuable testimonials to demonstrate the quality of service to potential clients, funding bodies, and regulatory authorities. They offer meaningful insight into the impact of the services provided by Oakdale and help reinforce confidence in their quality and delivery.

Please see the table below outlining the procedure when a compliment is received:

Scenario	Action
<b>Compliment received verbally or in writing from client/family member/external party</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The recipient</b> completes the Oakdale Feedback Form on the Intranet Dashboard marking the feedback as '<b>Compliment</b>'.</li> </ul>

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<b>Receipt of feedback reporting form by the Governance Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Governance Team</b> will record the compliment internally for monitoring and analysis.</li> <li>• <b>The Governance Team</b> will share compliments with the wider team(s) on a quarterly basis.</li> </ul>
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## Complaints

Oakdale is committed to ensuring that all complaints are addressed fairly, promptly, and transparently. The following procedure outlines the steps taken to review, investigate, and resolve complaints in a manner that upholds procedural fairness and supports continuous improvement.

Please read the below outlined procedures, alongside the process map in **Appendix A**.

### Stage 1: Local Resolution

Please see the table below outlining the procedure for a stage 1 complaint:

Scenario	Action
<b>Complaint received verbally or in writing from client/family member/external party</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The recipient</b> of the complaint will make every effort to resolve the complaint, or escalate it to a senior team member who can.</li> </ul>
<b>The complaint is resolved immediately, or within 3 working days</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The recipient of the complaint, or the staff member who resolved the complaint</b>, submits the details through the Feedback Form via the Oakdale Intranet Dashboard. This is recorded as a '<b>Complaint</b>'. The Feedback form should detail how the complaint was resolved.</li> </ul>
<b>Inability to resolve the complaint within 3 working day</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complaint escalates to stage 2, following the process below.</li> </ul>

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## Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation

Stage 2 will commence in cases where it has not been possible to resolve the complaint at Stage 1 of this policy due to the complexities of reaching a resolution.

Please see the table below outlining the procedure for a stage 2 complaint:

Scenario	Action
<b>Complaint Escalates to Stage 2</b>	<b>The recipient</b> of the complaint submits the details through the Feedback Form via the Oakdale Intranet Dashboard.
<b>Feedback Reporting Form received by the Governance Team</b>	<p><b>The Governance Team:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sends a Complaint Acknowledgement Letter to the client within 3 working days. The letter includes the timescale of response (28 working days), and any other relevant details.</li> <li>Shares the below documents/details with the Operational Lead for that division to commence the complaint investigation (28 working days): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback Reporting Form</li> <li>Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation Record</li> <li>Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation Response Letter Template.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2 Investigation Commences</b>	<p><b>The Operational Lead:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reviews the complaint and assigns an Investigating Officer.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Investigating Officer:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may contact the complainant directly, if required, to introduce themselves and understand the complaint raised</li> <li>provides regular updates to the complainant where appropriate</li> <li>investigates the complaint to understand the root cause(es)</li> <li>takes the relevant steps to ensure the complaint is resolved.</li> <li>records all actions on the Stage 2: Formal Complaint</li> </ul>

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	<p>Investigation Record</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drafts the Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation Response Letter Template.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2 Investigation Concludes</b>	<p><b>The Investigating Officer:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shares both the Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation Record and the draft Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation Response Letter with the Operational Lead.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Operational Lead:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviews all related documents prior to sharing with The Governance Team.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2: Response Letter</b>	<p><b>The Governance Team:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shares the Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation Response Letter with the complainant within 28 working days of receiving the complaint. The letter must detail how to escalate their complaint to stage 3 of this policy.</li> </ul>

At Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the complaints process, a complaint outcome will be provided to the complainant within their Response Letter. Complaint outcomes are categorised as:

- **Upheld** - evidence supports the complaint
- **Partially upheld** - only some aspects of the complaint are supported by evidence
- **Not upheld** - there is no evidence to support the complaint.

This ensures clarity, transparency, and consistency in how complaints are resolved.

### Stage 3: Senior Management Appeal Review

A complainant may appeal if they:

- are dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome
- believe the policy has not been adhered to
- have new relevant information to provide

The complainant must submit their appeal in writing to Oakdale within 10 working days of the Stage 2 Response Letter. This must be marked for the attention of the Governance Team at the Oakdale Group, using the details below:

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### Oakdale Group Governance Team

49 Valley Drive,  
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North Yorkshire,  
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**Email Address:** [dpo@oakdalecentre.org](mailto:dpo@oakdalecentre.org)

The appeal must include the original complaint reference number, the reason for appeal, and any supporting documents.

Please see the table below outlining the procedure for an appeal at stage 3:

Scenario	Action
<b>Appeal Received in Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Governance Team</b> alerts the Senior Management Team (SMT) upon receipt of the appeal.</li> <li>• The Senior Management Panel is convened, consisting of 3 senior members of staff.</li> <li>• <b>The Governance Team</b> sends a Stage 3: Appeal Acknowledgement Letter to the complainant within 3 working days. The letter includes the assigned panel members, the timescale of response (15 working days), and any other relevant details.</li> <li>• <b>The Governance Team</b> provides the Panel with all documents related to the complaint to date.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3: Senior Management Appeal Review Commences</b>	<p><b>The convened Panel:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• examine all documentation relating to the complaint</li> <li>• assess procedural fairness</li> <li>• consult with the original investigator/s where required</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3: Senior Management Appeal Review Concludes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Panel</b> provides the Governance Team with a final written decision, which may uphold, modify, or overturn the Stage 2 outcome, concluding the internal complaints process.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3: Senior Management Appeal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Governance Team</b> shares the Stage 3: Senior Management Appeal Review Outcome Letter with the</li> </ul>

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<b>Review Outcome Letter</b>	complainant within 15 working days from the date the appeal was received.
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## Duty of Candour

In cases where the level of harm experienced and reported in the letter of complaint has caused or could cause moderate to severe harm, Oakdale follows the statutory Duty of Candour process. This includes offering a sincere apology, providing a clear explanation of the facts known at the time, and keeping the complainant informed throughout any investigation, however, the Duty of Candour does not replace Oakdale's formal complaints procedure.

## External Escalation

If dissatisfied with the internal outcome, complainants may escalate to external bodies:

### Contacting Ofsted about Oakdale's Adoption Support and Trauma Service

A complaint can be made to: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street Tel: 0843 504 0627

Manchester

M1 2WD

### Contacting CQC about Oakdale's Prescribing Services (ADHD Medication Service)

A complaint can be made to: Care Quality Commission

Online at <https://www.cqc.org.uk/give-feedback-on-care>

### Contacting the Ombudsman

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Online at <https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/>

## Contacting Professional Bodies

Organisation	Email	Telephone
British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)	<a href="mailto:bacp@bacp.co.uk">bacp@bacp.co.uk</a>	01455 883300
UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)	<a href="mailto:info@ukcp.org.uk">info@ukcp.org.uk</a>	020 7014 9955

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British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)	<a href="mailto:babcp@babcp.com">babcp@babcp.com</a>	0161 705 4304
Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)	<a href="mailto:ftp@hcpc-uk.org">ftp@hcpc-uk.org</a>	0300 500 6184
General Medical Council (GMC)	<a href="mailto:gmc@gmc-uk.org">gmc@gmc-uk.org</a>	0161 923 6602
Social Work - England	<a href="mailto:enquiries@socialworkengland.org.uk">enquiries@socialworkengland.org.uk</a>	+44 (0) 808 196 2274
Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)	<a href="http://Nmc.org.uk">Nmc.org.uk</a>	020 3307 6802

## Persistent Complainants and Unreasonable Behaviour

Oakdale is committed to handling all complaints fairly. However, in rare cases, individuals may act unreasonably or persistently in ways that affect staff wellbeing and complaint resolution.

### Unreasonable behaviour includes:

- Excessive or repetitive contact that unjustifiably consumes staff time
- Refusing to accept outcomes or raising issues without new evidence
- Abusive, threatening, or intimidating conduct
- Contacting multiple staff or departments about the same issue

**Persistent complainants** are those who continue pursuing a complaint after a final response has been given, without new evidence.

In such cases, Oakdale may take proportionate action, such as:

- Assigning a single point of contact
- Limiting communication methods and frequency
- Ceasing responses unless new, relevant information is provided
- Escalating internally if behaviour risks staff wellbeing or service delivery

## Oakdale Staff Concerns

Oakdale staff members who wish to raise a complaint or concern related to their employment, including issues involving colleagues, management, or workplace practices, must do so through Oakdale's Grievance Policy. This ensures that all concerns are handled in a structured, fair, and confidential manner. Staff are encouraged to raise issues promptly and follow the outlined procedure to support timely and effective resolution.

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## Whistleblowing

Oakdale is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and accountability. If you are a client or external party and have serious concerns about misconduct, fraud, or unethical behavior involving Oakdale services or staff, we encourage you to raise these in line with Oakdale's Whistleblowing Policy. Any concerns raised are treated with confidentiality and respect, and Oakdale takes all concerns seriously to ensure they are thoroughly and fairly investigated.

## Governance and Quality Assurance Arrangements

Oakdale utilises the **Healthcare Complaints Analysis Toolkit (HCAT)** to analyse complaints, identify key themes, and support continuous improvement.

HCAT works by categorising complaints into specific domains, which help structure analysis and highlight areas for learning. These domains are outlined and defined below.

### Healthcare Complaints Analysis Tool (HCAT) Domains:

Domain	a <b>domain</b> refers to a broad category that represents a key area of healthcare service where issues or concerns may arise
<b>Safety</b>	concerns related to actual harm or risk of harm to clients
<b>Effectiveness</b>	issues involving poor outcomes or concerns about the quality of care
<b>Access/Availability</b>	problems with waiting times, appointment booking, or communication barriers
<b>Environment</b>	complaints about cleanliness, facilities, or physical accessibility
<b>Listening/Communication</b>	issues with clarity, tone, respect, or how information is shared
<b>Respect/Experience</b>	concerns about dignity, equality, or cultural sensitivity in patient interactions

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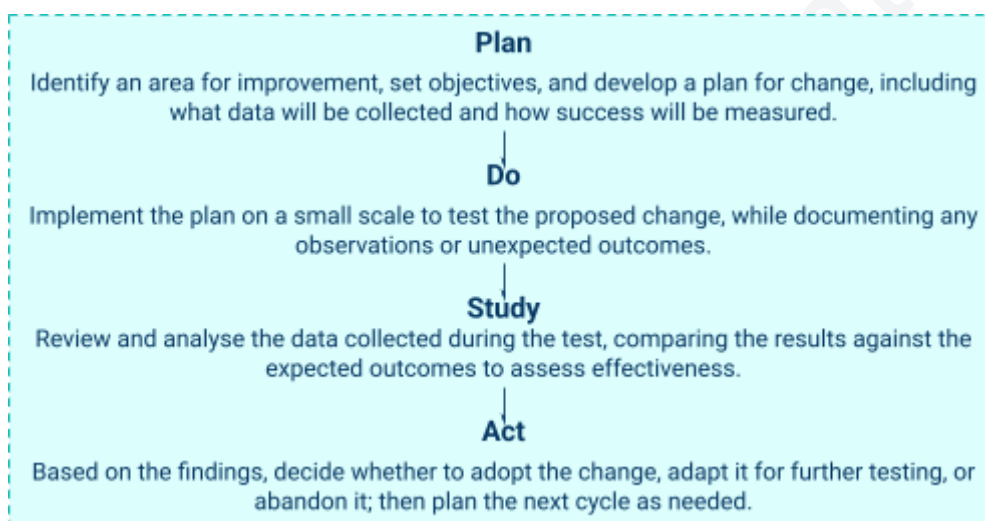
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## Process

- **Monthly:** The Governance Team conducts monthly reviews of all complaints.
- **Analysis of key themes:** Each complaint is coded using the HCAT domains to extract key themes and learning.
- **Quarterly Reporting:** Summary reports are shared quarterly with the Board and the relevant Governance Group.
- **Annual Audit:** An annual evaluation is conducted against CQC, NHS, Ofsted, and HCAT standards.

## Quality Improvement Cycle

Each complaint feeds into a **Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)** loop:



## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Monitored

- The number of complaints and the time taken to resolve them is regularly monitored.
- The percentage of complaints falling under each HCAT domain is tracked to identify themes and trends.
- Client satisfaction post-resolution is recorded to assess the effectiveness of complaint handling within Oakdale.
- Repeat complaints and unresolved cases will be monitored to highlight any areas needing further attention.

## Communication

- Complaint trends will be shared at the relevant Oakdale Governance Group Meetings for consideration and discussion.

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- Complaint trends are shared with Heads of Service to support wider communication and targeted service improvements.

## Related Documents

- Stage 2 Formal Complaint Acknowledgement Letter
- Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation Record
- Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation Response Letter
- Stage 3: Senior Management Team Appeal Review Acknowledgement Letter
- Stage 3: Senior Management Team Appeal Review Outcome Letter
- Stage 2/Stage 3: Feedback Holding Letter
- CQC Regulation 16:  
<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-regulation/providers/regulations-service-providers-and-managers/health-social-care-act/regulation-16>
- NHS Complaints Regulations 2009:  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/nhs-england-complaints-policy>
- HCAT Framework: <https://qualitysafety.bmj.com/content/25/5/355>
- Ombudsman Guidance:  
<https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/organisations-we-investigate/complaint-standards>
- Ofsted Complaint Guidance:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure>

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<b>Owner</b>	<b>Dr Caroline Falconer, Clinical Director</b>
Author(s)	Lee Clewett, Head of Clinical Governance Ella Scaife, Governance Administrator
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<b>Version</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>
CommentsComplimentsandComplaints Policy_V5_January2026	Implementation of HCAT framework and auditing processes Updated Responsibilities
Issue Feedback_ComplimentsCompl_Policy_BO_April2024 V4	Policy review
Compliments_Complaints_CQC_Jan2023_workingdoc	New OG format incorporated along with new naming convention, JKD April 2023
BO_001V3_FC&C_Policy1_2023	Updated with new Equality Impact Statement on cover page, JKD 04May2023
June 2022	Last yearly review conducted by Caroline Falconer, Clinical Director Approved by Lorian Rein, Managing Director
April 2016	Initial policy creation

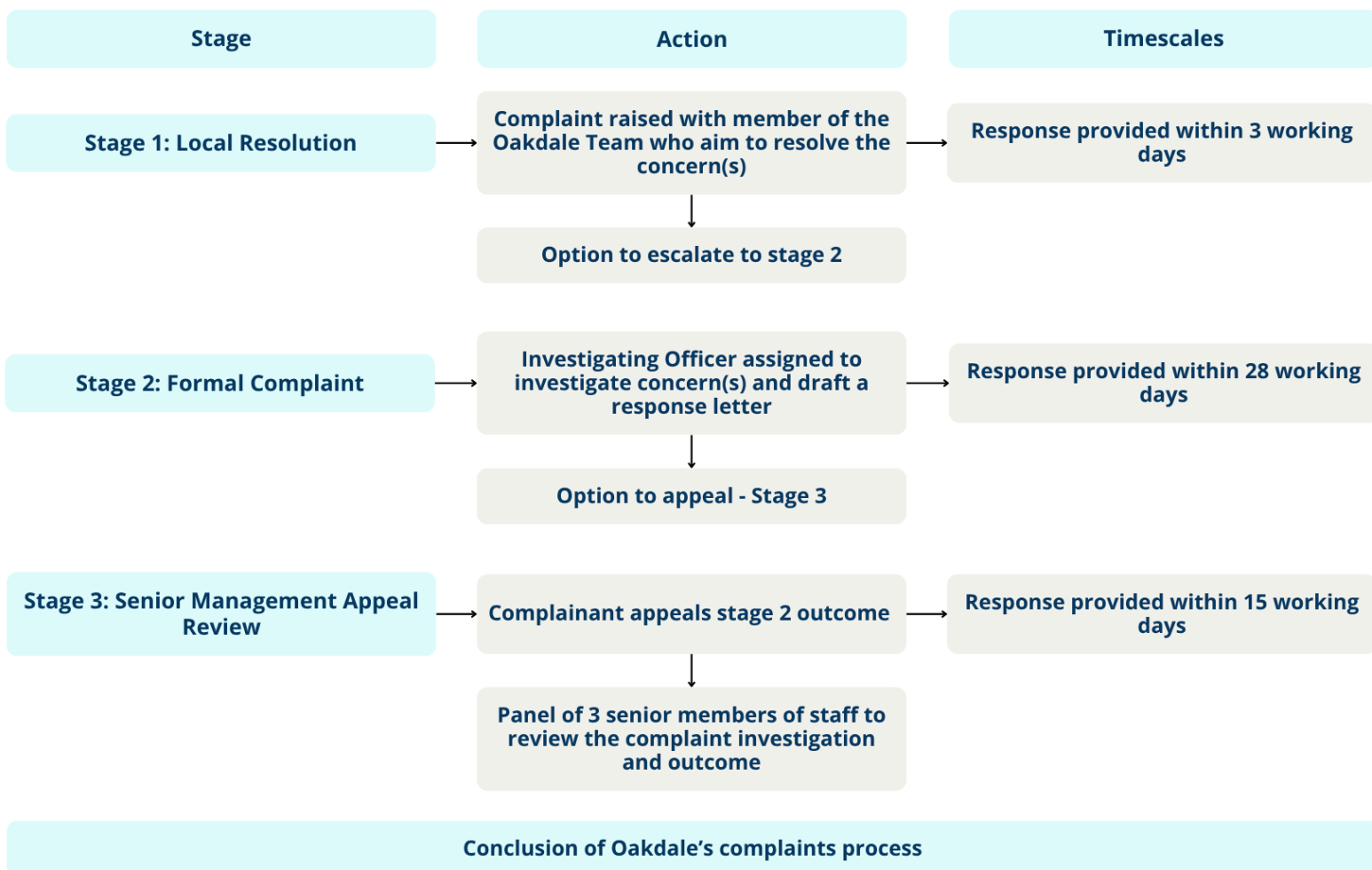
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## Appendix A: Complaint Process Map



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## Appendix B: Feedback Form

Your feedback is important and will help Oakdale to:

- Respond to concerns quickly and put right any errors
- Make internal changes to Oakdale's processes
- Recognise staff/colleagues if they've done an exceptional job

### PAGE 1

**Please provide as many details as you can about what happened leading up to completing the Feedback Form, including dates, names of practitioners, etc.,**

Please use as much space as you need. If you are using a paper copy of this form, please feel free to continue on the back of this page:

*Your feedback will be kept confidential in line with our Privacy Policy. It may be anonymised and used for purposes such as testimonials or contractual/regulatory submissions.*

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Sometimes Oakdale might need to clarify feedback or ask additional questions. If you agree, please complete the information below.

**OPTIONAL Contact Information**  
**PAGE 2**

<b>Name of person reporting:</b>	
<b>Date form completed:</b>	
<b>If this is a complaint, is it being filed on behalf of someone else?</b>  <b>If so, is that person a minor?</b>  <b>If you're completing this for someone else, who should Oakdale contact for questions and to help resolve the complaint?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  <b>Contact information:</b>
<b>If you require a response, how should Oakdale make contact?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> No contact
<b>Please provide your contact information:</b>	

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