

## 3.4 Letter Writing Procedure

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### 1. Who is Responsible?

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Letters may be written by a variety of people although the person closest to the issue should usually be responsible. A Service Manager must approve all letters written by Home Managers or staff. Disciplinary letters, references or letters outlining the outcome of investigations etc. must be approved by Regional Manager unless specifically delegated

### 2. General Layout

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Always use headed notepaper or the electronic letterhead. Letters should be written in Arial Font point 11. Use the [Letter template](#).

### 3. Mode of Address

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You are writing the letter on behalf of the business, not personally. Therefore you must refer to what 'we' (the team/business) will do or think, not 'I', e.g.: "It is **our** experience that..." or "**We** propose that..." Or "**We** undertook an assessment"

### 4. Closing Signatures

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The letter must be closed using the author's name and post title and signed by the author.

### 5. Reply Addresses

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All letters sent out by a member of staff at a Unit/home should only have the HQ address as per the headed notepaper. All correspondence returning to the company should be sent to HQ first where it will be date stamped and then passed onto the staff member concerned.

### 6. Guidelines - Presentation and Language

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#### 6.1. Make The letter Readable

- **Layout is important.** Your letter must be laid out and presented to the standards set out above.

- **Don't try to fit too much information into one page** - *people don't read solid blocks of type.* Therefore use short, concise sentences and paragraphs
- **Avoid unnecessary words** such as, '**basically**', '**currently**', '**entirely**', '**very**' etc.
- **Don't make things up just to fill space.** If there is little to report leave it that way.

## 6.2 Use Appropriate Language

- **Use simple plain English.** Don't try to blind people with science. Keep it simple
- **Use positives rather than negatives.** Your letter may need to address negative or sensitive issues but balance these with whatever positives you can find.
- **Use bias-free words.** People are very unhappy (rightly) with words that insult our differences. Therefore be aware of whether words are racist, sexist, dis-abled or homophobic etc.
- **Don't cancel out your previous points.** The use of words such as '**however**', '**though**', or '**but**' can have the effect of negating the previous sentence or phrase.

## 6.3 Concentrate on the Positives

Whilst it is sometimes necessary to address negative or sensitive issues you must tease out and emphasise what the positives showing, as far as possible, what we are doing to help put things right and/or what the positives are.

Try to balance negative statements with positives, e.g.:

*Having been unstable for some weeks after he was admitted, Peter has stabilised in recent weeks and...*

*Joanne found it difficult to settle into our school but she is now attending every day and is a positive influence on her peers.*

*Paul continues to be verbally aggressive toward the female staff but he is starting to develop close relationships with many of them.*

## 6.4 No Surprises

Avoid surprising the person receiving the letter. Try to talk to the person first using the letter to confirm what has been said or agreed. Don't use the process to enter into memo or letter warfare!

## 6.5 Don't use Emotive Terms or Generalisations

Especially those with a negative connotation such as 'verbally aggressive'. Always describe/explain what you mean or have seen using plain language.

Avoid expressing your opinions unless they are based on firm evidence. If you do express an opinion or judgement, state clearly that it is such.

## 6.6 Show the company in a positive light

Incorporate ways in which we have made a difference or how we are positively dealing with issues of concern. Also play up what we can do for the future.

## 6.7 Summary

A quality letter helps everyone: the child, you and the business.

- All letters must be approved by a Manager (See Below);
- Always use headed paper;
- Always retain a copy;
- Make sure the letter looks good and reads well;
- Concentrate on the Positives;
- As far as possible show the company in a positive light;
- Use plain, simple English, not jargon;
- Use short, concise sentences and paragraphs;
- Use language which is free from discrimination.

## 6.8 Sample Letter

### Use headed notepaper

Start the address at 5cm from the top of the page. This will then fit any window Envelope. Use Arial Font size 11.

}

**}Leave 3 blank lines**

}

Insert **Reference and Date** (Usually your initials and the date)

}

**}Leave 3 blank lines**

}

Dear Sir/Madam, etc.

**}Leave one line**

Either start the letter or insert a heading here

**(Heading should be centred and in Arial Black) }Leave one line between heading a body of letter.**

Begin letter. Think about the content of the letter. Start with general introduction. You should always leave one space after a comma and two spaces after a full stop.

**}Leave one line between each paragraph.**

Next Paragraph should lay out the reason you are writing - if a number of subjects there could be a number of paragraphs.

**}Leave one line between each paragraph.**

End with paragraph confirming any response, information etc. you require.

**}Leave one line between each paragraph.**

Yours faithfully (**if dear sir or Madam**), sincerely (**if dear Mr./Mrs. Name**),

}

**}Leave 4/5 blank lines for signature**

}

}

}

Your Name

Your Position (**e.g. Keyworker, Home Manager, Regional Manager**)

Look at the letter in 'Whole Page View' once finished to check how it looks on the page. If it is a short letter you may wish to bring the side margins in and increase the font size to 12 so that it looks balanced on the page. If there is a lot of information you may wish to widen the margins and reduce the font size to 10, especially if it has gone onto a second page by a couple of lines.

## **7. Revision History**

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Date last updated: May 2020

Date of next review: May 2021

Date of release: December 2018

**End**

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