

Policy no. 5

Compliments and Complaints Policy

It's always nice to hear if you're doing a good job. However, we are also keen to improve our services and welcome both positive and constructive feedback from any one at any time.

Various processes exist for encouraging clients to provide feedback on our services. These are addressed further in the Service User Involvement policy.

Aim of Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all feedback received by Your Sanctuary is dealt with professionally; compliments are shared and celebrated; complaints and concerns are addressed and resolved at the earliest possible stage in a professional and supportive manner.

Policy Statement

Your Sanctuary welcomes all feedback at any time. This policy is available to all clients, external individuals and organisations in receipt of Your Sanctuary services or working in partnership with Your Sanctuary. Any individual should be free to make themselves aware of the procedures without fear of prejudice or judgement.

Informal Procedure

Whilst the policy below outlines a formal process for providing feedback to the organisation, including making a formal complaint, an individual may choose an informal approach in the first instance by discussing this with either their support worker or another member of staff. If the informal procedure isn't satisfactory the formal route can still be taken.

Procedure

Positive feedback will be shared with the team and recorded. This may then be used when reviewing what works best in our service. Anonymised positive feedback may be used for funding bids, reports, marketing and on our website. If you do not want your comments used in this way, please inform the person to whom you are providing the feedback. This must then be recorded along with your comments.

In the event of a complaint, the complainant should make their complaint known as soon as possible but in any event within 6 months of the reason for the complaint occurring.

Some clients may wish to raise a complaint after they have used our services. Information about the feedback procedure should be:

- Displayed clearly in each of the refuges.
- Verbally explained by the Refuge Support Worker upon arrival to the refuge.
- Verbally explained by the Outreach Worker.
- Explained to third parties where required.
- Displayed on the Your Sanctuary website.

The complaints procedure consists of three stages. Assistance must include ensuring that the complainant understands how to use the complaints procedure.

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The emphasis at each stage of the complaints procedure is on resolving the problem in a fair and appropriate manner as soon as possible; however, the formal schedule is outlined below.

Stage 1

We try to resolve simple stage one complaints within five working days; if it is going to take longer we will let you know. We aim to provide a full response within 10 working days.

Stage 2

We will acknowledge your request for a further investigation within 5 working days. We aim to provide a provisional response within 20 working days. Complex complaints may take longer and if this is the case we will keep you informed.

Stage 3

We will acknowledge your request for a further investigation within 5 working days. As stage three investigators and respondents are volunteer Trustees we need to acknowledge that a stage three response will take longer than a stage two. We aim to acknowledge your request for a further investigation within 5 working days. We aim to provide a provisional response within 30 working days. Complex complaints may take longer and if this is the case we will keep you informed.

Stage 1

The complaint should be brought to the attention of either the Therapeutic Services Lead or the Adult Community Services Lead who will undertake to review the initial complaint. Please send an email to: feedback@yoursanctuary.org.uk

The complainant should be given a copy of this procedure.

The complaint should be recorded by the Lead dealing with the complaint and include the following details:

- Initial complaint(s).
- Date complaint(s) made.
- Dates of events occurred.
- Person(s) involved.

The Lead should, within three working days, arrange to meet with or speak to the complainant to establish the issue needing resolving, and discuss with them possible ways of resolving the problem.

The Lead should inform the complainant of the outcome of the complaint and highlight:

- Outline of complaint details
- Action taken
- What actions by whom and when
- Whether or not the complaint was resolved

If a satisfactory outcome is not achieved, the complainant will be informed that they can take the

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matter on to the next stage, the Lead dealing with the complaint should notify the CEO. This notification should occur within 5 working days of the completion of stage 1.

Stage 2

Where there has not been a satisfactory outcome for the complaint the CEO will lead the investigation at stage 2.

The CEO will meet with or speak to the complainant and establish what aspect of the complaint is still unresolved. The CEO should then meet with or speak to the Lead handling the complaint and anyone else she sees fit, to establish what has been done to date.

Following this the CEO will produce a report on the complaint, normally the report should be completed within 20 working days and will comprise of the following:

- Evaluation of the actions that have taken place to date to try and resolve the problem.
- Identifying any area(s) of remaining dissatisfaction
- Recommending further means of resolving the problem.

The CEO will also comment on whether procedures and practices have been followed and whether any disciplinary, practice or policy issues arise from the situation.

The complainant and all concerned will be sent a letter explaining the outcome of the CEO's Investigation. The letter will highlight that there is a third stage and give information about how to take the complaint forward to the next stage, if unresolved.

A brief note of the outcome of stage 2 should also be recorded.

Stage 3

The CEO should write to the Board of Trustees stating what aspect(s) of the complaint needs to be taken forward into stage 3.

The Board of Trustees will review all of the information and interview those involved, if necessary. They will then produce a report on the complaint and responses to it evaluating and recommending whether there are other actions or responses that could be taken in resolving the complaint and judging whether or not the complaint is substantiated.

A brief note of the outcome of this stage will be recorded and signed by the Board of Trustees.

A letter will be sent to the complainant and all concerned explaining the reasons for the decisions.

In relation to clients, this will be the final response for those complaining as a result of services received through our community based services. This also applies to complaints received from partner and external sources.

If the complaint is regarding our refuge service, the complainant will have recourse to the external complaint's procedure:

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- Approach the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Board of Trustees, CEO and Lead have a duty to provide the client with the information needed to contact this organisation and the Lead will support the client at this stage.

If the complaint is taken to this external stage a brief record of this will be made.

Third Party Complaints

Matters relating to individual clients remain confidential. In dealing with any complaint concerning the service provided to an individual client, confidentiality and the safety of the client will be paramount. This principle also applies to former clients.

Neither managers nor the Board will enter into any discussion with any third party concerning the details of the service provided to any individual client, or former client, unless the complainant is acting on behalf of and with the explicit and recorded permission of the client.

However neither managers nor the Board will enter into any discussion with any third party whom the client/former client has previously alleged to be a perpetrator of domestic violence or abuse, even if the client has given that person permission to act on their behalf.

At no stage of any Third Party complaint under consideration may the complainant be accompanied by any person whom the client/former client has previously alleged to be a perpetrator of domestic violence or abuse.

Any complaint made by a third party acting on behalf of and with the permission of a client, concerning the service provided to that client, must be reported immediately to the Board. In the first instance senior managers may be asked to seek to resolve the matter, depending on the nature of the complaint, and to inform the Board of the outcome.

If a complaint by a third party representing a former client, with that client's permission, which is under consideration, cannot be resolved by managers, the matter will be referred to the Board. The complainant will be invited to put their complaint in writing and managers will be asked to submit a report on the actions taken to try to resolve the matter. A holding response will be sent as soon as is reasonably possible and an investigation conducted. When this has been completed the Board will respond to the complainant.

Monitoring

Your Sanctuary welcomes feedback and any complaints received will be periodically reviewed and where applicable used to improve service delivery. As part of our ongoing monitoring the CEO will monitor the number of formal complaints, the time they took to resolve and the outcome.