

Complaints Procedure

Purpose

Complaints are an opportunity to improve the quality and efficiency of the services the Company provides to its Clients. This policy encourages Clients to voice their concerns so that difficulties can be speedily resolved to the satisfaction of all.

Statement

The Company strives to achieve the very best outcomes for its Clients all the time. However, on occasion, things can go wrong, and as such, may be the subject of a complaint. If they do, we need to know about it so we can put it right, learn from our mistakes, and implement organisational, procedural or operational changes so as to reduce the potential for complaints in the future. It is the Company's commitment to:

- always take complaints seriously and investigate them fairly;
- deal with complaints according to this procedure, unless they are relatively minor;
- treat complaints confidentially;
- never discriminate against a Client for making a complaint;
- ensuring that Clients know of the existence of this policy, and how to make a complaint if they wish to do so.

Complaints may be made directly by Clients, or they may be made on behalf of a Client if the Client is unable or unwilling to undertake the process alone.

Procedure and Guidance

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with regards to:

- The standard of service provided;
- Action or lack of action taken;
- Decision taken.

Complaints may be made orally or in writing (letter or email). When the complaint is made orally, the Company's understanding of the problem will, if necessary (in that the complaint has not or cannot be resolved informally) be summarised in a written acknowledgement.

Our approach

Informal Complaints

All staff are instructed to take complaints seriously. Where complaints are made orally, then staff are asked to try to resolve the problem immediately, and informally. The more formal procedure outlined here will usually not be instigated where the subject of the complaint is relatively minor, such as a complaint that a Carer arrived 5 minutes' late, or used an incorrect form of address etc. In such cases the recipient of the complaint will apologise unreservedly and express the wish that such events will not be repeated. In every case the Client will be asked to confirm that they are happy with the response given.

If not, then the matter must be treated as though it was a written complaint. On occasion a Client may make a complaint orally and directly to a Carer, for example, or by phone to the office, on a more serious issue which cannot be dealt with informally. In such cases the individual receiving the Complaint will

record the details of the complaint, and advise the Company without delay. The essence of the complaint will be summarised in the Company's acknowledgement.

Formal Complaints

All written complaints, or complaints made orally which have not been satisfied or are of a more serious nature, will be regarded as formal complaints and recorded in the Company's register of complaints.

All formal complaints will be handled by, or under the supervision of the Senior Manager, unless the complaint is about the Senior Manager, in which case the complainant will be referred to an alternative Senior Manager or an external organisation, such as the Care Quality Commission.

Acknowledgement

The complaint will usually be acknowledged within ten days of receipt. The acknowledgement will outline the essence of the complaint, unless this has already been stated in writing by the Client. The Company will outline the process to be undertaken, the likely duration of any investigation or consideration, and the name of the person who oversees the matter. The Company will always aim to respond to formal complaints within ten days of the letter of acknowledgement. On occasion, and in response to more serious matters, a longer initial timeframe may be required. If subsequent events indicate a likely delay, then the complainant will be kept informed, given the reason for the delay and where possible, given an updated timeframe.

Written response

Written responses will outline the nature of the complaint, the matters given consideration by the Company, and its response. Once this has been sent, the Company will follow up directly with the Client, within 5 days, as to whether they feel that the matter has been dealt with appropriately, and to their satisfaction. Where this is confirmed, the Company will write to the Complainant outlining what has been discussed and agreed. If the Client remains dissatisfied, however, then further considerations may be given to help resolve any differences. However should the Company's ability to resolve the matter prove insufficient, then the Client will be advised in writing of the situation and that they may seek external advice, such as an approach to the Care Quality Commission, for example.

Records

The Company will maintain records of all formal complaints, and details in relation to their outcome.

Learning from our mistakes

Every formal complaint is an opportunity to improve. The Company will ensure that errors, mistakes or other omissions or failures are examined carefully so as to understand what needs to be done to prevent the same or similar incidents in the future.

Complaints about staff

Where a complaint is about the behaviour of a member of staff, and behaviour is found to be inappropriate, unprofessional or abusive (for example), then the Company may terminate the staff members contract. Where appropriate, matters may also be referred to external bodies, such as the Disclosure and Barring Service, in cases of serious misconduct.