

SERVICE USERS' COMPLAINTS POLICY



1. Purpose

Sight Support West of England aims to provide its service users with practical and emotional support to enable them to live as independently as possible, taking into account their differing needs and aspirations. However, we recognise that from time to time the quality or level of services provided falls short of what they could reasonably expect. It is only by drawing attention to these occasions that Sight Support can learn and develop, making sure that the services provided meet the realistic expectations of clients.

Therefore we would like you to tell us if you feel that Sight Support has:

- failed to respond to a routine service request
- provided inadequate or unsatisfactory service
- displayed undue delay in taking action
- a member of staff who has been discourteous or unhelpful
- given inaccurate or misleading information.

Note: Any complaints concerning Safeguarding of Children or Vulnerable Adults, or about Data Protection, are covered under separate policies as the reporting procedures and actions are substantially different. We take all complaints in these areas extremely seriously and will deal with them with the utmost urgency.

2. Making a complaint

In the first instance, any complaint should be made either in writing, using recording tapes, Braille format, or dictated over the telephone at a time pre-arranged with the CEO.

- Written, or dictated complaints should be addressed to the CEO and sent to our Devizes Head Office.
- Telephone complaints should be made by ringing 01380 723682 and an appointment made for dedicated telephone time to be booked with the CEO or an individual nominated by the CEO.
- The complaint should state: Name, where and how you can be contacted, and full details of the complaint with dates and times etc.

On the rare occasions where the initial complaint is about the CEO, contact details of the Chair of the Board (or nominated representative) will be given so that the complaint can be directed there.

3. Action to be taken on receipt of a complaint

3.1 Complaints not against a member of staff

All complaints are taken seriously and will be acknowledged within 7 working days of receipt. Except in the case of a complaint against the Board of Trustees or member of staff, the CEO will investigate the circumstances that have led to the complaint. If he/she feels able to resolve the complaint, a reply will be sent in the appropriate format (that originally used by the complainant). The acknowledgment will set out either (i) why he/she does not feel the complaint is justified or (ii) if the complaint is justified, an apology and what steps have been taken to prevent a similar complaint arising in future. The Chair of Trustees will be kept fully informed by copy correspondence.

3.2 Complaints against a Member of Staff or Executive Board

In the case of a complaint against a member of staff or a member of the Board, the CEO (or Chair of Board if the complaint is about the CEO) shall acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days and offer an informal meeting within 21 days of receipt of the complaint.

The meeting is to ensure that the complainant is clearly listened to and all aspects of the complaint have been heard without any prejudice on behalf of the officer concerned. At the end of the meeting the complainant will be advised what the next steps will be and how they are to be kept informed of the outcomes.

If the CEO feels unable to resolve the complaint, he/she may refer it to a member of the Board within the 21-day period for further consideration or investigation. The complainant will be informed if this additional step is required.

The CEO/Chair of Board will consider all the information and decide upon any actions required and shall communicate the results of the investigation to the complainant within a reasonable time, normally within 21 days.

During the above steps an additional period of time for investigation may be considered where details of the complaint are complex and require more information.

If the complainant feels that the outcome of the informal meeting with the CEO has not achieved conciliation, the complainant shall have the right to refer his/her case personally to a sub-committee of no more than three Trustees. Board members will receive a copy of all correspondence prior to this meeting.

At the end of the meeting the complainant will be advised what the next steps will be and how they are to be kept informed of the outcomes.

The decision of the Trustee sub-committee shall be final.

4. Recording Complaints

The Board of Trustees shall be regularly informed by the Chief Executive of the number and nature of complaints, and their outcome.