



## Complaints Procedure

**The Complaints Procedure** forms part of The Care Forum's commitment to developing a quality service. Complaints and their resolution are an important part of learning about what the organisation does not do well and helping The Care Forum to improve its services. The Care Forum hopes that most problems arising can be resolved informally. However, where that is not possible, this procedure will be followed.

The formal complaints procedure enables people to make clear complaints about the organisation and ensures that they know what happens to that complaint and its outcome. It is important to distinguish between general feedback and a formal complaint. This procedure is for the latter.

### **The Complaints Procedure can be used by:**

- Users of the services of The Care Forum. This could be an individual, statutory organisation, voluntary or community organisation.
- Organisations who fund or commission The Care Forum
- It does not apply for staff or other workers, for whom there is a separate Grievance Procedure.

### **The Complaints Procedure can be used to make complaints about:**

- A member of staff
- A member of the board of trustees
- Work undertaken by The Care Forum
- Matters of management
- Matters of policy

If a complaint is made about a member of staff, the Care Forum will investigate the allegation and Disciplinary Procedures may be applied where taking further action against that staff member is considered appropriate.

### **How does the Complaints Procedure work?**

There are several stages of the complaints procedure. The Care Forum is committed to seeking to resolve complaints at each stage. If a quick resolution is not possible, the Chief Executive will appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate the complaint and produce a report with recommendations. The Chief Executive will adjudicate upon this report and provide a response to the complaint on behalf of The Care Forum. If the complainant is not satisfied with the adjudication, s/he may request the convening of an Appeal Panel which will be chaired by a person who is independent of both parties.

## **Guiding Principles**

- **Responsiveness and Quality**

The Care Forum aims to deliver a high quality service that is responsive to the needs of its members, stakeholders and users of its services. Through use of the complaints procedure, The Care Forum can identify what it does not do well and, through the resolution of the complaint, improve itself.

- **Simple and accessible procedures**

This Complaints Procedure has been written in as simple and straightforward a way as possible. The Procedure can be made available in accessible formats, as required. Anyone making a complaint is able to bring a friend or advocate as support.

- **Confidentiality**

Wherever possible, a complaint will be treated as confidential to the organisation and to the immediate staff concerned, unless the board of trustees considers (at the end of the complaints process) that it is contrary to the best interests of The Care Forum to do so.

- **Accountability**

When a complaint is made, different levels of the management of the organisation will be informed and be involved in its resolution. The procedure includes an appeal to an independently chaired Appeal Panel.

- **Speed and Accessibility**

The Complaints Procedure offers a single entry and single procedure for all types of complaints. The procedure aims to enable a rapid verbal response or resolution within 2 weeks.

### **Roles of Chief Executive and Chair**

The Chief Executive of The Care Forum will administer and service the Complaints Procedure unless the complaint is about the Chief Executive, when the Chair of the board of trustees will undertake this responsibility. If the complaint is about the Chair, the Vice Chairs will undertake this responsibility. When a staff member or a piece of work they are responsible for is subject to a complaint, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the board of trustees, can use his or her discretion to remove a member of staff from a piece of work for the duration of the Complaints Procedure. Such action should not be seen as prejudicial to that member of staff.

### **Stages of the Complaints Procedure**

Action	Responsible Person	Timescale from receipt of complaint (in working days)
<b>1: A complaint is made and acknowledged</b>		
All verbal or written complaints passed to the Chief Executive	Staff and trustees	Day 1
Confirm that this is a complaint rather than general feedback	Chief Executive	By day 3
Letter of acknowledgement to complainant, offering to discuss details of the complaint by phone or in person		
Copy of Complaints Procedure sent to complainant		
Complaints file opened, to include notes of the complaint, action taken, dates and copies of correspondence.		By day 3 and ongoing
<b>2: Aim for a quick resolution of the complaint</b>		
Discuss the detail of the complaint with the complainant, at meeting or by phone	Chief Executive	By day 7
Identify preliminary options about how the complaint may be resolved.		
If resolved, action taken regarding resolution.		
If resolved, letter to complainant confirming how it was resolved.		
Board of trustees updated regarding complaint and resolution.		
<b>3: Formal Investigation, where informal discussions have not resolved the complaint</b>		
Complainant is asked to place their complaint in writing if not already done so	Chief Executive	By day 8
<b>Investigating Officer appointed and where appropriate subject of complaint is informed.</b>		
Complainant advised that they can have an advocate or friend to support them	Investigating Officer	



Record of complaint is drafted, registering relevant facts and dates. This may involve a meeting with the complainant. The record is signed by the complainant as an accurate record of the complaint, and is copied to complainant.	Complainant	By day 12
Investigating Officer investigates complaint by laying out the facts; collecting the evidence; considering and describing options for resolution.		By day 18
Investigating Officer may interview people, including complainant and <b>subject of complaint, as appropriate</b> , in which case complainant is encouraged to bring advocate or friend.		
Investigating Officer produces a report which will address each issue of complaint and outcomes sought by way of resolution in turn. The report will recommend whether each issue of complaint should be upheld or dismissed and whether the outcomes sought should be provided. If the complaint is upheld, the report may also make recommendations for resolution which may refer to disciplinary procedures.		By day 20
The Chief Executive receives the report and decides whether each issue raised by the complainant should be upheld or dismissed and what resolution (if any) is appropriate.	Chief Executive	
A copy of the report is sent to the complainant. The board of trustees is updated.		
<b>5. No resolution is reached with complainant - Appeal Panel</b>		
Complainant sent letter offering opportunity to appeal to an Appeal Panel and an explanation of what this entails. The complainant will be encouraged to bring an advocate or friend to support them in this. The complainant is requested to put their wish to appeal in writing.	Chief Executive	By day 25
If the complainant wishes to appeal, a formal report to the board of trustees detailing progress made to date.		By day 3 of wish to appeal letter.
Appointment of Appeal Panel including an independent person to act as chair and 2 members of the board of trustees and set date for Appeal Panel.	Chief Executive	By day 8

Complainant invited to Appeal Panel and informed that they may be accompanied by an advocate or friend and that they may submit their own papers.		My day 8
Appeal Panel meeting receive all written correspondence relating to the complaint.	Chief Executive	By day 10
Appeal Panel meeting - chaired by a person who is independent of The Care Forum. The complainant can submit his or her own papers, in addition to any records on file. The complainant may choose to make a verbal presentation of the complaint to Appeal Panel, lasting a maximum of 15 minutes. The Appeal Panel may ask questions of the complainant.	Appeal Panel Complainant	
The Appeal Panel will make a final decision on the complaint and detail its final outcome	Chair	
Update of board of trustees and discussion regarding learning and appropriate action required.	Chief Executive	By day 15
The complainant is notified of the decision of the Appeal Panel and the final outcome of the appeal.		

If you would like to make a complaint or have general feedback to give The Care Forum, please contact the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Business Support Co-ordinator.

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Agreed by the Executive Committee



