

COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS POLICY

1. Introduction

At Sense Ability Matters, we are committed to delivering high quality services and maintaining transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. We welcome all feedback, including complaints, compliments, and comments, as they help us improve our services and ensure we meet the needs of our service users.

This policy sets out the procedure Sense Ability Matters will follow when receiving a complaint, compliments and comments from a service user, an organisation or member of the public.

This complaints, compliments and comments policy applies to anyone not working for the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to:

- children and young people
- parents and carers
- funders
- members of the public
- other organisations.

2. Aims and Objectives

This policy outlines how individuals can share feedback with us and how we will respond. It ensures that:

- Complaints concerning service users are handled fairly, effectively, and sensitively.

- Compliments are shared with relevant individuals and teams.
- Comments are reviewed and considered to improve our work.

3. Types of feedback

Compliments

Compliments help us recognise what is working well within our organisation, allowing us to build on our successes. We deeply appreciate positive feedback about our staff, volunteers, and team members, and we make sure they receive your kind words directly so they can understand the positive impact of their work.

Comments

All constructive comments and suggestions will be reviewed and, where appropriate, used to improve our services.

Anonymous feedback

We welcome all feedback and encourage you to include your name so we can acknowledge your input, follow up where necessary, and keep you informed of any outcomes. However, we also value anonymous feedback, which will be carefully considered and appreciated, though it may limit our ability to take full action or provide a response.

In general, you can compliment us or give general feedback at any time. We will always do our best to acknowledge your comments and compliments. However, if we have been unable to, they are always appreciated, and we strive for them to be passed on to any relevant parties internally.

How to share your feedback

We encourage all feedback to be in written form, whether email or letter. If feedback is given orally, we encourage it to be followed up in writing. This ensures the feedback is received in its truest form.

Whether you have a compliment or comment, we always encourage you to speak directly to the team or person involved first.

If you have been unable to give feedback directly, below are the contact details for who to contact whether your feedback is about someone working on behalf of the organisation, its staff or any senior leaders.

- For staff – Sarah French (sarah.french@wearesam.org.uk)
- For Volunteers – Claire Parker
(claire.parker@wearesam.org.uk)

Complaints

We define a complaint as; an expression of dissatisfaction about our service, actions taken, or a lack of action taken, by or on behalf of the organisation.

Its purpose is to provide a means to resolve disputes between Sense Ability Matters and any complainant. All complaints will be investigated thoroughly.

If a complaint alerts us to possible abuse or neglect, then the appropriate Safeguarding team will be contacted for advice.

The aims of this policy are to:

- The main object of the procedure is to deal with complaints concerning service users as quickly and appropriately as possible.
- Provide easy access for complainants by enabling all appropriate staff to receive and respond to complaints.
- Provide a rapid, open, fair, conciliatory response which meets the need of the complainant and is fair to staff.
- Ensure a means of providing feedback to managers in order that, where appropriate, lessons are learned, and services can be improved thereby preventing a recurrence of incidents and complaints.

We will ensure that all written information regarding this policy and procedure and regarding individual complaints are available in the most appropriate format.

Making a Complaint

A complaint can be made in a number of ways:

- by telephone
- in person
- in writing
- by email

The complaint may be made directly by the individual involved or with the help of an appropriate third party such as their carer, social worker or an advocate.

If you're complaining on behalf of someone else, include their written consent with your letter (if you're making your complaint in writing) as this will speed up the process.

But consent is not required if you're making a complaint in the name of:

- a deceased person
- someone who lacks the [capacity](#) to make their own decisions
- a [non-Gillick competent child](#)

The Procedure

As soon as a complaint is received it must be recorded on the organisations Complaints Log by the member of staff who receives the complaint. The Complaints Log must be updated by the member of staff dealing with the matter at every stage of the proceedings.

The person with overall responsibility for the management of the complaints procedure is Sarah French.

Step 1

As soon as a complaint is received the relevant person or their line manager (as appropriate) should make every effort possible to sort out the issue immediately by providing the information required or by taking appropriate action.

Step 2

If the complaint cannot be sorted out immediately to the satisfaction of all parties, the matter will be passed to the Director of Services to deal with.

A letter (or appropriate communication) will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days setting out the following:

- contact details for the Director of Services
- confirmation that the matter is being investigated
- the timescale, which will usually be 20 working days

Once the investigation is complete the results will be sent in writing (or appropriate format) by the Director of Services.

Step 3

If the complainant is not happy with the result they can ask the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to look again at the complaint.

The request must be made within 10 working days of receiving the outcome. The CEO will provide a full response within 20 working days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint they can choose to escalate this to either the local Council, or the Optical Consumer Complaints Service [Home - Optical Complaints - Optical Consumer Complaints Service](#)

In Gateshead contact:

Adult Social Care, Gateshead Council,
Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH.
Tel: 0191 433 3000

In South Tyneside contact:

Children, Adults and Family Services, South Tyneside Council
Kelly House, Hebburn, NE31 2SW
Tel: 0191 424 4679

Right to complain to Ombudsman or the regulator

This will be our final response to your complaint/ appeal. You may now complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is not a further appeal. It looks at whether we have followed the right steps when taking action or reaching a decision.

The Ombudsman decides whether it can and should investigate complaints. For example, the Ombudsman may decide not to investigate your complaint if you have not been significantly personally affected by the issue you are raising. You can find out more information about what complaints the Ombudsman may consider on its [website](#).

If you wish to raise your complaint with the Ombudsman you can find out more information about how to do so below:

Website: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/how-to-complain>

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

The Care Quality Commission

Our service is registered with and regulated by Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CQC cannot get involved in individual complaints about providers but is happy to receive information about our services at any time. You can contact the CQC at:

Care Quality Commission National Correspondence Citygate
Gallowgate

Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA

T: 03000 616161

W: www.cqc.org.uk

Procedure for making a complaint

Once you have been through all stages of our complaint's procedure, you can ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to consider your complaint. The Ombudsman is not a further appeal. It looks at whether we have followed the right steps when taking action or reaching a decision.

The Ombudsman investigates complaints in a fair and independent way - it does not take sides. It is a free service. The Ombudsman expects you to have given us chance to deal with your complaint, before you contact them.

About the Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman looks at individual complaints about councils and some other organisations providing local public services. It also investigates complaints about all adult social care providers (including care homes and home care agencies) for people who self-fund their care. There are some limits on what the [Ombudsman can look at](#).

Confidentiality

Any information received/used in the complaints process is covered by Data Protection Guidelines.

- All personal data will be kept safe and secure
- No information will be shared with other organisations without the complainant's permission unless we are legally required to do so

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be logged and investigated as thoroughly as possible in the circumstances. Any poor practice etc. identified will be actioned accordingly.

Service Improvements and Performance Monitoring

Managers should use the issues raised in individual complaints to explore and, where appropriate, initiate service improvements.

A report setting out anonymised details of complaints logged, and action taken will be submitted to the Board for scrutiny at their quarterly meetings. The Board will support services in making any necessary changes identified.

Complaints monitoring

Managers should use the issues raised in individual complaints to explore and where appropriate, initiate service improvements. Issues arising from complaints, problems and other user feedback should be a standard item for discussion at team meetings.

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