
Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure

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Policy, Purpose & Aims

Carers First is committed to giving carers the best possible service, involving them in the planning of their care, with opportunities to share any compliments, comments or complaints that they may have on the service or organisation. We welcome this feedback from carers, as it helps us to improve services.

When services do not reach the expected standard, we aim to ensure that all carers and, wherever possible, professionals and wider members of the public, have access to information on how to raise a concern or make a comment or complaint, providing support for those involved throughout the process.

This policy applies to anyone accessing our services, volunteers, members of the public and other agencies. It provides a framework on how to identify, receive, handle and respond appropriately to all complaints from our carers or their representatives, in line with best practice.

It is important here to define what we mean by compliments, comments and complaints in the context of this policy:

A **compliment** is a statement of positive recognition or praise for a service or individual. Carers, family members or professionals may wish to let us know about something that has gone well, so that we can share this best practice, and share it (as appropriate) with relevant staff.

A **comment** may be defined as the expression of a personal opinion, belief, feedback or remark received by Carers First, whether positive, negative or neutral, which does not meet the threshold for a formal complaint. These are used to shape service delivery. We would always seek to resolve any comments or concerns early and informally wherever possible. However, when this is not possible, a negative comment or concern can be escalated into a formal complaint if appropriate.

A **complaint** may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'. An individual may make a complaint if they feel we have:

- Failed to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service.
- Delayed in providing a service.
- Made a mistake in the way we have provided a service.
- Failed to act in a proper way.
- Provided an unfair service.

As such, we aim to ensure that all carers and / or their representatives know how to raise compliments, concerns or comments with us, or make a complaint, so that we can continue to improve.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for policies and procedures at Carers First, so far as is reasonably practical.

The Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team

The Chief Executive is the 'Responsible Person' for complaints, compliments and comments received regarding Carers First services, overseeing and supporting the Senior Leadership Team to:

- Ensure the appropriate development, implementation, investigation, management and monitoring of all complaints, compliments and comments.
- Undertake investigations into serious complaints as directed by the Chief Executive.
- Monitor and report on the implementation of improvement plans within SLT meetings.
- Monitor procedures for reporting and investigating complaints and comments, scrutinising trends and serious cases.
- Review and disseminate learning from incidents to other relevant parts of the organisation.
- Highlight systemic or very high concern cases to the Board of Trustees.

Heads of Service and Service Managers

The role of the management group above is to:

- Instigate and support reporting of complaints, compliments and comments.
- Ensure appropriate responses, including identifying and meeting any support needs for involved individuals as far as possible.
- Participate in investigations into complaints as directed by their line manager.
- Log any complaint made via local commissioner processes as required.
- Report complaints, compliments and comments made within the service on a quarterly basis to Managers meetings, local team meetings and quarterly reports.
- Where directed by SLT, be responsible for investigating the complaint, interviewing the complainant and anyone directly involved which may include staff, other professionals or users of the service, collating any evidence which may prove or disprove the complaint.
- Complete reports outlining their findings which the designated Director will use to make their decision.

Employees, volunteers and the wider workforce¹

The above group are required to:

- Act with due care for their own safety and that of others who may be adversely affected by acts or omissions during work activities.
- Report any identified risks, concerns, or shortcomings relating to safety or to quality of care immediately to the relevant manager to prevent adverse or poor service delivery.
- Respond to and report complaints promptly using this policy and its accompanying procedures.
- Co-operate fully with any investigation as a result of a complaint.

Legislative Framework

Our approach to the management of complaints, compliments and comments is underpinned by the following legislation:

- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Equality Act 2010
- Fundraising Standards Board (FRSB) – Code of Fundraising Practice

It is also supported by the following Carers First policies:

- Information Security Management Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection Policy

Our Principles

Carers First is committed to providing high quality services for carers and their support networks. It is important to us that we know when we haven't got something right; and equally

¹ This includes Carers First employees, volunteers, and persons that are working on behalf of Carers First (e.g. sub-contractors, agency, temporary workers).

when we have provided a good service, so that we can replicate this and share good practice with those who support carers. We are committed to the following principles:

- All complaints or comments received will be treated seriously and will be dealt with sensitively in compliance with this procedure, looking to resolve them at the earliest opportunity.
- All reasonable efforts will be made to find a solution that is acceptable to all concerned.
- Complainants will be given opportunities to discuss the issue and will be encouraged to ask an advocate, friend or someone else to support them, where appropriate.
- Our Complaints Process will be freely available and accessible via a variety of formats including online via the website.
- Complaints will be investigated fully and fairly.
- No person making a complaint shall be viewed negatively for doing so by anyone in the service and the charity will ensure that no complainant or their representative is subject to discrimination on any grounds in accordance with the Equality and Diversity Policy and the Equality Act 2010.
- Complaints will be dealt with in confidence unless another person could be put at risk by matters referred to in the complaint.
- Any complaint that involves, or may involve, a safeguarding issue must immediately be reported to the Locality Safeguarding Lead and the Designated Safeguarding Officer who will follow the relevant Safeguarding processes. Such cases are likely to be reported to the Safeguarding Authorities and be subject to investigation by them.
- Carers First may be obliged under contract to report complaints to funding bodies, for example the local authority. Personal or identifiable details will not be disclosed regarding the complaint without prior written consent from all parties.
- Anonymised information from complaints is used to make sure lessons are learnt and improvements are made to services.

We appreciate when people have taken the time to offer us their feedback, whether through a complaint, or less formally through a comment or compliment. We will recognise these contributions, acknowledging them promptly with a response either verbally or written. Where a complaint is involved, we will act in accordance with our Complaints Procedure detailed below.

Dissatisfaction with Service(s) - First Steps

We always try to provide the highest quality of service and best possible experience for the people we support. However, we recognise that sometimes we do not always get this right, and there may be times where our service does not reach expectations.

If this happens, we encourage people to talk to a member of staff, or manager, if they are unhappy with the services they have received. We will always try to resolve issues

informally, having open discussions to come to a satisfactory resolution, wherever possible.

If we are unable to resolve the problem informally, individuals can make a formal complaint as follows:

Making a Formal Complaint

There are several ways to make a formal complaint about our services:

- Send an email to: feedback@carersfirst.org.uk
- Phone our Helpline: 0300 303 1555.
- Write to our head office:
Carers First
Unit 4 Michael Gill Building
Tolgate Lane
Strood
Kent ME2 4TG

There are 3 stages to the complaints' procedure:

- Stage One - Formal Complaint.
- Stage Two – Appeal.
- Stage Three - Independent Review.

Stage One – Formal Complaint

We strive to resolve concerns promptly and to the satisfaction of those involved, either by the staff member or the appropriate manager responsible for the service. This may be achieved through an apology, delivering the required service, or through offering a clear and acceptable explanation.

Complaints can be made through any of the mechanisms detailed above. Complainants will receive acknowledgement of the complaint, confirming a response within 5 working days. The complaint will be added to the Complaints Log and will be allocated a unique reference number. Details of the complaint will be emailed immediately to the Senior Leadership Team, who will appoint a Designated Manager (DM) to oversee the complaints process, and who will be the complainant's named contact.

The DM will provide a written response, including the outcome of the investigation and any proposed actions, within 15 working days of receiving the formal complaint. . If required, a further meeting will be offered to discuss the outcome of the investigation. In exceptional cases where the deadline cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons and

provided with a new expected response date.

Stage Two – Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they may submit an appeal in writing to Carers First's Chief Executive within 10 working days of receiving Carers First's written response, who will decide any further steps to resolve the situation.

The Chief Executive will review the complaint and order any further investigations as required. They will then send the complainant a final written response to their appeal telling them (within 10 working days) their findings and any proposed actions.

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive; or the complainant is still not happy with the Chief Executive's response, complainants should write to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Stage Three - Independent Review

If the complainant is someone who uses our services and remains dissatisfied after we have investigated their complaint, they may also complain directly to the Commissioner (usually the Local Authority or Health Body that funds their service). Or they can ask for their complaint to be reviewed by someone independent from Carers First. The Local Government Ombudsman can advise who to contact in these situations.

Giving Feedback – Comments and Compliments

Carers First appreciates all feedback about services and individual staff members, both formal and informal. Accordingly, we also want to know when people have had positive experiences and are happy with the services they have received, as we will use this feedback to build on good practice and make improvements, sharing it with individuals, teams, managers, and Trustees as appropriate. Again, there are several ways to do this:

- Tell a team member or manager.
- Send an email to: feedback@carersfirst.org.uk
- Comment on social media.
- Phone our Helpline: 0300 303 1555.
- Write to our head office:
Carers First
Unit 4 Michael Gill Building
Tolgate Lane
Strood
Kent ME2 4TG

Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure

We are committed to continuous improvement and view every comment, compliment or complaint as an opportunity to grow and strengthen our service. By listening carefully, responding promptly, and acting with integrity, we aim to build lasting trust with everyone we serve. Your feedback - positive or negative - matters to us, and we are dedicated to ensuring carers' voices are heard and valued.

Appendix A – Complaints Process

All documentation for the complaints process can be found:

>Master Documents

>Governance

>Complaints Templates

For all Complaints received via Website, Helpline or in the Community

01. Complainant or staff member sends email to feedback@carersfirst.org.uk

02. This mailbox will send an auto email acknowledging receipt, and confirming response within 5 working days

03. Executive Assistant (EA) adds complaint to Complaints Log and allocates a unique reference number

04. EA emails details of the complaint immediately to SLT

05. SLT appoints a Designated Manager (**DM**) to oversee the complaints process

06. DM contacts complainant as their named contact, and confirms written response will be made within 15 days of initial complaint (via letter or email)

07. DM completes **Terms of Reference Formal Complaint Template** & appoints an Investigating Officer (**IO**)

08. IO undertakes investigation using **Investigation Plan**. (To include interviewing the complainant, other staff and volunteers, service users and external professionals, as appropriate)

09. IO completes Investigation Report Template within 12 working days of formal complaint being received and forwards to DM

10. DM decides to dismiss or uphold all/part of the complaint. DM sends written reply to complainant with details of investigation and any proposed actions, within 15 working days of formal complaint being received. If appropriate, further meeting offered to discuss outcome of investigation

11. If disciplinary action is recommended for a staff member, DM forwards all documents relating to complaint to HR Manager who proceeds as appropriate

12. Complaint investigation outcome analysed by relevant Director, establishing whether any service/process improvements are required

13. DM sends update to feedback@carersfirst.org.uk so EA can update Complaints Log

14. Reports provided to SLT and People & Governance Committee to highlight any emerging trends, very serious complaints, and/or requirements for organisation-wide changes

15. DM updates BlueBox