

## **Gateshead Access Panel**

# **Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure**

### **1.0 Introduction**

However excellent the efforts of those who provide services may be, causes for dissatisfaction may occur. It is essential that those wishing to make a complaint, compliment or comment about our service can do so in a non stressful manner. This document therefore sets out the procedure that all Trustees, Staff and Volunteers will follow on receiving a comment, compliment or complaint from a service user, an organisation or member of the public.

The aims and objectives of Gateshead Access Panel are cited in the Constitution Document available from the office of the Panel.

### **2.0 Comments and Compliments**

**2.0.1 Comments both positive and negative** with suggestions for improving the service provided by Gateshead Access Panel are welcomed. Negative comments – depending on the situation - may be acknowledged as a complaint either verbally or in writing and will be responded to appropriately following the procedure below.

**2.0.2 Compliments** regarding the service should also be encouraged. Such positive statements are important because they improve morale and also reinforce to staff and volunteers the appreciation felt by service users when a high quality service is achieved.

Comments and Compliments will also be fed back to staff, Volunteers and members of the Board of Trustees.

Any subsequent actions regarding improvements to the running and quality of Gateshead Access Panel will be noted.

### **3.0 Complaints**

It is essential that where complaints arise they be dealt with sensitively and effectively. Complaints are likely to be in one or more of the following areas:

- Dissatisfaction with services,
- Problems with casework,

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- Unacceptable delays,
- Failure to deliver a service,
- Discourtesy or unhelpfulness on the part of staff and volunteers,
- Inappropriate behaviour by staff or volunteers.
- Inappropriate behaviour by The Chairperson or other Trustee

### **3.1 The Procedure**

#### **3.1.1. Oral or Informal Complaints**

- It may be possible for many oral or informal complaints to be resolved on the spot or within a short period of time without any written communication. The person making the complaint should attempt to raise the issue with the member of staff or volunteer concerned to ensure that there has been no misunderstanding.
- If the complaint concerns a volunteer and the complainant feels they cannot approach the volunteer in question the complainant should, in the first instant approach the member of staff who is responsible for the volunteer placement.
- If the complaint concerns a member of staff and the complainant feels they cannot approach the member of staff in question. The complainant should approach the General Manager who will attempt to resolve issues through mediation especially where there are concerns or problems rather than complaints.

#### **3.1.2. Formal Complaints**

Where the complainant is not satisfied that the informal complaint procedure has resolved the matter or where they consider the matter is more serious than a misunderstanding, this then becomes a formal complaint. The following actions must be taken.

#### **3.1.3 Complaints against Members of Staff and Volunteers**

- The complaint must be sent to the office of Gateshead access Panel in a format of the complainant's choice (see below).
- The complaint should be registered as soon as possible after an incident. If a complaint is received a long time after the incident the complaint may not be able to be investigated as rigorously but investigators will ensure the best possible investigation takes place.
- The complaint will be logged in the register of complaints.

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- A copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the General Manager who will usually investigate the complaint or will decide which member of staff will have the responsibility for handling the complaint.
- A copy of the complaint will be sent to the person the complaint is being made against
- A written acknowledgement will be prepared and sent to the complainant within 3 working days.
- A response will be prepared and sent to the complainant within one month of receipt of the complaint.

### **3.1.4 Anonymous Complaints**

- Negative comments or complaints from an anonymous caller/visitor are usually difficult to process through the official complaints procedure. This is because for example, we may require extra details. We will however endeavour to handle these appropriately.
- Callers / visitors are reassured that the service they receive will not be affected through the receipt of a complaint from them.

### **3.1.5 Data Protection** Information will be handled sensitively and is covered by Data Protection Guidelines in that personal data:

- will be kept safe and secure
- will not be shared with other organisations or projects without your permission (unless the law says we must)
- may be used to prevent and detect fraud.

Information received that indicates a risk situation to any vulnerable user will be handled immediately by the General Manager.

## **4.0 Recording and Monitoring Complaints, Comments, Compliments**

- All complaints, whether informal or formal, will be recorded on a Complaint monitoring form and kept on file.
- All complaints will be treated as confidential.
- A report of the comments, compliments and complaints received will be given to the Board of trustees at their meetings.

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## **5.0 Complaints against the Manager, Chair person, or a Trustee**

**Complaints against the Manager** should be addressed to the Chair, and directed to the office of Gateshead Access Panel indicating the matter to be Private and Confidential.

**Complaints against the Chair** should be addressed to a Trustee and directed to the office of Gateshead Access Panel indicating the matter to be Private and Confidential.

**Complaints against a Trustee** should be addressed to the Chair and directed to the office of Gateshead Access Panel indicating the matter to be Private and Confidential.

## **6.0 Procedures**

- The complaint will be logged in the register of complaints.
- Copies of the complaint will be forwarded to the General Manager, Chair person and Trustee Panel.
- The Chair person will set up a complaints Panel where the complaint is about the General Manager or a Trustee.
- The General Manager will ask the Trustees to set up a complaints Panel where the complaint is about the Chair person.

## **7.0 Complaints Panel**

- A Complaints Panel should consist of the Chairperson and two Trustees.
- In the event of the complaint being against the Chair person the Panel should consist of three Trustees. One of the trustees should be elected as Chairperson for the duration of the complaints procedure.
- The Panel will decide how to formalise their investigations.

## **8.0 Objections and Appeals**

### **8.0.1 Objections**

A complainant can raise any reasonable objection to the Complaints Panel as to the membership of that Panel. The Chairperson of the Complaints Panel must receive the objection in writing not less than three days before the Panel are due to meet.

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## 8.0.2 Appeals

- If a complainant wishes to appeal against the decision of a Complaint they should write to the Board of Trustees who will investigate the issue as a full Board

## 8.0.3 If you are still not happy

- If you are still not happy you can complain to the appropriate funding body of a Project and / or to the Charities Commission. We will forward information regarding the appropriate funder on request as these change over time.

## 9.0 Making your complaint, compliment or comment

You can make complaints, compliment or comment in the format of your choice for example:

By telephone – 0191 4430058

In person – Unit K37, Eleventh Avenue North, Team Valley Trading Estate, Gateshead NE11 0NJ

On our pre-printed form

By email to the General Manager – [christine.access-gateshead.org.uk](mailto:christine.access-gateshead.org.uk)

By fax – 0191 487 7298

Through an advocate (we can provide information on independent advocacy services)

In a letter, on disc or on video

## 8.0 Ensuring the effectiveness of the Procedure.

All Staff, Trustees, and Volunteers will receive a copy of the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure.

Existing and new staff Trustees and Volunteers will be introduced to the complaints procedure via induction and training.

The procedure and complaints received will be reviewed yearly by the Board of Trustees.

Signed .....

Chair Person

Original Aug 05, Reviewed Aug 06, Aug 10, Feb 2012, Dec2013.

Next review date: Dec2014(address change), Dec 2016

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