

## Complaints Policy

### Policy Statement, Aims and Principles

In line with our organisational values and the Response Way the aim of this policy is to underpin the procedure for dealing with complaints in order to ensure the process is fair, equitable, open and transparent and completed within set time frames.

Complaints are an opportunity to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services. The policy is not designed to apportion blame, to consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation.

### Definition

A concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. This is not covered by this policy.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction however made about standards of service, actions or lack of actions by the organisation, staff or those acting on its behalf.

Anyone can make a complaint for themselves or on behalf of somebody else. Most complaints, if dealt with early, openly and honestly, can be resolved at a local level between the complainant and the organisation. Failure to address or resolve a complaint may result in a failure to operate according to our organisational values, an aggravation of problems, stakeholder dissatisfaction and even litigation.

### Legislation and Guidance

Whistleblowing March 2018  
Disciplinary June 2019  
Equality Act 2010  
Duty of Candor 2018  
Integrated Information Governance Policy 2012  
Stress management 2020  
The Safeguarding Vulnerable Group Act 2006  
Safeguarding and Protection from Abuse (Adults) 2019  
The Children's Act 2004 (Safeguarding)  
Care Standards Act Regulations 2015  
Complaints Regulations (UK Government) 2009  
Housing Ombudsman Scheme 2020  
Accident and Incident Policy 2007  
Protection from Harassment Regulations 1997

### What is not covered by this Policy

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- Incidents as defined in the Accident and Incidents Policy.
- Any complaint made by a member of staff about any matter relating to his or her contract of employment or about the conduct of another member of staff. Such matters should be addressed through the relevant Human Resource policy e.g., Grievance Policy.
- Disciplinary proceedings against a member of staff-see Disciplinary Policy.
- Safeguarding or Whistleblowing concerns will take precedent over this policy and are covered in the relevant organisational Safeguarding and Whistleblowing policies.

### Alternative investigations

Issues related to the areas described above under “What is not covered by this Policy” may arise during the investigation of a complaint. The complaint investigation may need to be paused if these issues might compromise or prejudice any other investigation. This decision will be made either by the Chief Operating Officer or Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Head of Quality or the Director of Corporate Governance and Compliance.

The decision will be communicated to the complainant. This will be in the form that the complaint investigation has been paused whilst the other process i.e., Serious Incident or Human Resources investigation is undertaken. The complainant will be kept informed during this paused period. Once the other process has been completed either the complainant will be informed the investigation has re-started or they will be informed of the conclusion of the other investigation. The outcome of human resource investigations will not be shared with the complainant.

During the investigation should issues arise that need to be escalated to third parties for reasons of managing risk and safety we will do this openly and transparently. This will normally be shared with the complainant while adhering to confidentiality and data protection regulations. This decision will be communicated internally to the Chief Operating Officer or Chief Executive Officer and shared with the Head of Quality or the Director of Corporate Governance and Compliance.

### Timescales

#### For making a complaint:

Complaints must be made in writing no later than:

- Twelve months after the date on which the matter which is the subject of the complaint occurred.

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or

- Twelve months after the date on which the matter which is the subject of the complaint came to the notice of the complainant.

### For responding to a complaint:

- Formal acknowledgement within two working days of receipt of complaint.
- Within 28 days and following an investigation the complainant will receive a full explanation, either in writing or by arranging a meeting.
- If the issues are too complex to complete the investigation within 28 days, the complainant will be informed of any extension necessary and the reasons.

### Appeals

The complainant has the right of appeal against the outcome of the complaint investigation. This must be made, in writing, within 14 working days of the notification of the outcome from the original investigation. A total of 2 appeals can be raised before the Internal Complaints Procedure is exhausted, further appeals would require submission to an external organisation by the complainant. The timescales for responding to an appeal is as with response to a complaint.

### Complaints Team

The dedicated contact details for submission of enquiries are:

[Complaints@response.org.uk](mailto:Complaints@response.org.uk)

Complaint Team  
AG Palmer House  
Morrell Crescent  
Littlemore  
Oxford  
OX4 4SU

Telephone: 01865 397 940

### Advocacy

For a list of advocacy services able to provide support to make a complaint contact the Complaints team.

### Review

## Complaints Policy

The effectiveness of this Policy is regularly monitored by the Complaints Team to determine whether any improvements are needed, and it is reviewed yearly.

**Reviewed and signed off by the Performance Committee on 06 April 2021**

**DOCUMENT CONTROL      This Policy must be reviewed by April 2022**

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First Issued:	Approved by:	<b>Louise Packer &amp; Angelo Fernandes</b>