

## Complaints Policy

Document Lead	Chief Executive Officer		
Type of Document	Policy		
Audience	Staff, volunteers, trustees, members of the public, service users, and customers		
Document Purpose	Sets out Chapter's policy for receiving, handling, and responding to complaints.		
Legislation and regulation			
Documents to be read in conjunction	Confidentiality Policy, Data Privacy Policy, Incident & Near Miss Management Policy		
Formally endorsed by	Board of Trustees	Date:	14/03/2018
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Policy locations	This policy is also located on the Chapter website		

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## Policy Purpose

Chapter views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

The purpose of this policy is to set out Chapter's policy for receiving, handling, and responding to complaints.

## Policy Scope

This policy applies to complaints made across the organisation and includes all services and divisions.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should refer to Chapter's Grievance Procedures outlined in the *Staff Handbook*. Volunteers should refer to the *Volunteer Handbook* for details of volunteer grievance procedures.

## Responsibilities

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring a Complaints Policy is in place and escalating any compliance issue to the Board of Trustees. The Chief Executive officer is also responsible for handling all formal complaints and will escalate these to the Board of Trustees depending on the complexity or seriousness of the issue.

The Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring this policy is communicated across all services and staff and volunteers understand their role in handling complaints.

All staff and volunteers are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and for understanding how to receive complaints in line with this policy.

## Aims & Objectives

In handling complaints Chapter will:

- provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- make sure everyone at Chapter knows what to do if a complaint is received
- make sure that complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- gather information which helps us to improve what we do

## Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Chapter's, administration, a staff member, process, or service – resulting from Chapter's failure to meet the individual's expectations.

## Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, in line with Chapter's *Confidentiality Policy* and any relevant data protection requirements. Details of complaints will only be shared with Chapter team members where necessary to handle the complaint or to take learning from a situation or incident.

## Complaints Procedures

### Submitting a Complaint

We want to make it easy for you to contact us and to provide feedback or make a complaint. You can get in touch with us in the following ways:

1. Face to face: if you are dealing with a member of staff or freelancer and you wish to complain, then please speak to them directly. It may be possible to resolve the issue immediately. However, if that is not possible, then he/she will record the details of your complaint and will send it through to the Chief Executive Officer
2. You can call us on [01244 344 409](tel:01244344409) and your complaint will be documented.
3. You can email us on [info@chaptermentalhealth.org](mailto:info@chaptermentalhealth.org)
4. You can write to us at our head office: Stanlaw Abbey Business Centre, Dover Drive, Ellesmere Port, West Cheshire, CH65 9BF.

In all instances where a complaint is made using the above means, we will contact you within 48 hours of receiving the complaint. If you provide us with a telephone number and/or email address, we will contact you by either of those means to discuss the matter further and to officially record all necessary details.

Hopefully we can resolve the matter immediately. However, if the issue is more complex and an investigation is required, we will do the following:

The person who receives a complaint will:

- Record full details of your complaint and log the complaint in Chapter's *Incident & Near Miss Reporting System*

- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Chapter, e.g., donor, sponsor, beneficiary, service user
- Take all necessary steps to investigate the matter
- Contact you again within 15 working days of receiving the complaint to advise you of our findings or to give you an update on progress
- Continue to keep you informed until the matter is resolved to your satisfaction or until all appropriate steps (in Chapter's reasonable opinion) to resolve the matter have been taken

## Resolving complaints

Our commitment to any complainant is to address each complaint in a sensitive, fair, transparent, equitable, professional, and unbiased manner through the complaints handling process.

We will always operate from the premise that any person is entitled to express his or her views on our services and that those views should be taken seriously where this is warranted. We will not, however, tolerate any abusive or discriminatory language or behaviour towards any of our staff, and may decline to investigate a complaint further in such circumstances.

## Stage 1

In many cases a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint should be logged via the *Incident & Near Miss Reporting System* within five working days which will forward the complaint to the Chief Executive Officer.

On receiving the complaint, if not already resolved, the Chief Executive Officer will delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within five working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of the *Complaints Policy* should be attached. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 15 working days. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and (subject to the terms of Chapter's *Privacy Policy* and *Confidentiality Policy*) any action taken as a result of the complaint.

## Stage 2

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Board of Trustees. The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Board of Trustees may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage 1. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage 1 should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

## Final Stage

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the subsequent reply, then the complainant has the option of writing to the Charity Commission. Information about the kind of complaints the Charity Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: [gov.uk/complain-about-charity](https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity).

## Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about a Chair or trustee should not also have the Chair and/or trustee involved as a person leading a Stage 2 review.