
External Complaints Procedure

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1.0 Introduction

The Mental Health Foundation is committed to providing a high standard of service. Unfortunately, despite all best intentions things can go wrong. When this occurs, we need to be informed so that every effort can be made to put matters right and to prevent such incidents in the future.

This policy and procedure sets out how the Foundation deals with general complaints about the organisation and its staff.

The procedure is designed to enable appropriate consideration to be given to a complaint, in a way that is fair and as impartial as possible.

Complaints made will in the majority of cases be handled by a senior member of staff.

The Foundation aims to treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction which requires an immediate response.

Where necessary we will carry out internal investigations, and if necessary, this will be carried out by an individual outside of the Foundation's employment.

We aim to respond appropriately to all complaints, which may result in the complainant receiving an apology (where there has been wrongdoing), an explanation, or details of any investigation outcomes and action taken as appropriate.

2.0 Purpose, principles and values

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance on managing external complaints consistently within the Foundation.

The Foundation is committed to upholding its essential principles and Values: Side by side, Walking our talk, Determined pioneers, Making a difference.

3.0 Making a complaint

Many complaints or concerns can be resolved informally, by discussing it with a relevant member of the Foundation's staff. In these situations we aim to resolve informal concerns as quickly as possible and enable mediation to take place if necessary.

3.1 Stage 1

In the event that a situation has not been resolved informally, the complainant should write to the Foundation within 8 weeks of the issue arising at customerservices@mentalhealth.org.uk. If a person is unable to put their concerns in writing they should be given the opportunity to discuss this with a senior member of staff who will make a record of the complaint.

They should explain the issue/complaint as clearly and fully as possible, naming any staff involved and providing details of action taken to date. They should also provide details of the consequences of any problem arising and details of any remedy sought as appropriate.

The Foundation will endeavour to acknowledge the complaint normally within 7 calendar days of receipt. Complaints should initially be sent to the relevant Director or Human Resources. Please be aware that not all situations/issues are in the control of the Foundation.

At the discretion of the Chief Executive or Human Resources, a complaint may be considered serious enough for the issue to be investigated immediately under the procedure detailed in Stage 2.

3.2 Stage 2

If a satisfactory resolution has not been reached and the complainant is not happy with the initial response received to their complaint, they should write to the Foundation’s Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive’s Office will acknowledge the complaint normally within 7 calendar days of receipt and will respond normally within 4 weeks of receipt.

Whilst the Foundation will always attempt to resolve a complaint as quickly as possible, there may be circumstances where a situation requires thorough investigation, should this be the case the complainant will receive an interim explanation in writing updating them on how the complaint is being dealt with and details of when a full response may be expected.

3.3 Stage 3

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome and reply from the Foundation’s Chief Executive, they should write to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, detailing the reason for the dissatisfaction.

They should do so within 14 calendar days of receipt of the Chief Executive’s correspondence.

3.4 Complaints in relation to the Chief Executive

If an issue arises regarding the Chief Executive of the Foundation, in the first instance a complaint should be addressed to Human Resources who will notify the Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Chair will write to the complainant and detail the procedure the Board of Trustees will take.

3.5 Communicating outcomes

Once investigations conclude (whether informal or formal) the Foundation will consider what action to take and inform the complainant. Actions may include an apology (where there has been wrongdoing), an explanation, or action to rectify the situation where possible and appropriate.

3.6 Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure the confidentiality of the complainant and the Mental Health Foundation. There may however be cases where it is not possible to maintain confidentiality (for example due to the need to involve the Charity Commission or other public agency). Should this be the case the situation will be explained to all parties involved or affected.

4.0 Monitoring and review of this procedure

The Foundation will regularly monitor this procedure jointly with key stakeholders. This will normally be on a three-year rolling basis.

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1	April 2015	November 2022
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