

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

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Date Drafted:	April 2015
Date Effective:	June 2015
Last Review Date:	September 2021
Next Review Date:	November 24
Officer Responsible:	Chief Executive
Delegated Delivery Responsibility:	SLT

Version	Date	Note	Author
V1-0	June 2015	Original – New Policy Format	SLT
V2-0		Policy Reviewed	SLT
V3-0	August 2018	Policy Reviewed	SLT
V3-1	24 th Jan 2019	No changes to policy – just put into new format	Lisa Finch
V3-2	Sept 2019	Reviewed	Compliance Team
V3-3	October 2019	Adjustments to review panel process	Michele Leach
V3-3	May 21	Just added new logo/into Arial 11 ready for review – No other changes	Lisa Finch
V4-0	September 21	Full Review	Amy Weaver

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Overview

Carers First is committed to providing the highest quality of service possible for carers and others to whom support is provided. This commitment extends to all areas of work which staff and volunteers may be involved in on behalf of the charity. It includes all general contact and communication with staff, the giving of information, advice and the provision of support.

The charity wants you to be satisfied at all times with the service you receive and by the way you are treated. We understand that users of our service will at times wish to compliment us, make suggestions on how we can improve or indeed complain about them.

This policy explains the process of how to make a compliment, comment or complaint and the process which will be followed.

Definitions

This policy uses the following definitions:

- A compliment is an expression of praise concerning a service received.
- A comment is a suggestion for how a service can be improved.
- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, an act, omission or decision of Carers First, either verbal or written, and whether justified or not, which requires a response

All complaints and suggestions will be received positively and be used as a means to improve the quality of services. People who use our services will not receive a lesser service from us if they raise concerns or make a complaint.

Principles

- Any complaint received will be treated as serious and will be dealt with sensitively in compliance with this complaints procedure.
- Complaints will be investigated fully and fairly.
- 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 will be dealt with in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy.
- All reasonable efforts will be made to find a solution that is acceptable to all concerned.
- You will be given opportunities to discuss the problem and will be encouraged to use a friend to support them where appropriate.
- Carers First will, wherever possible, use the complaints procedure as a means of improving its services.

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Governance

All complaints, comments or compliments received from, or on behalf of a carer are logged and the appropriate manager informed who will take any necessary action.

The Board of Trustees are made aware of complaints through the Chief Executive Report presented at board meetings

Confidentiality

Everyone within the organisation is responsible for ensuring confidentiality is maintained appropriately at all times when dealing with complaints and comments.

In order to look into a complaint or concern it may be necessary to speak to other people it involves. This will be done giving away as few details as possible.

If the complaint or comment relates to a potential safeguarding concern we may be required to report the concern to the relevant bodies, eg local safeguarding team. We will always aim to seek permission for this but if the incident is time sensitive it may not always be possible.

After it's resolved, we will keep a summary on record, using the General Data Protection Regulations guidance. If you use our services and have a file, the record will be placed on your file.

We use anonymised information from complaints to make sure we learn and improve our services.

We may be obliged under contract to report complaints to funding bodies, for example the local authority. We will not disclose any personal or identifiable details regarding the complaint without prior written consent from all parties.

Inappropriate Complaints

Most complaints give useful feedback to us on our service. All complaints will be investigated and will not be influenced positively or negatively by the way in which it is delivered. However, Carers First has a responsibility to protect its staff from people who behave in a way which is abusive or malicious and if a complainant's behaviour prevents appropriate action the complaint cannot be pursued.

Examples of behaviour where the complaint may not be pursued:

- Abusive or threatening behaviour—whether in person or in writing.
- Persistent telephone calls, emails or letters on the same issue.
- Persistent verbal complaints that cannot be resolved.

Carers First is not required to investigate the following:

- a complaint by an employee relating to their employment (this should be handled through the grievance policy and procedure)

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- a comment on how the service can be improved (this will be used as a means to improve the quality of services).
- a complaint that was made in person by telephone or email and is resolved to the complainant's satisfaction no later than the next working day after the day the complaint was given
- a complaint that has already been investigated and resolved.

Complaints Procedure

If you wish to make a complaint then there are three stages to go through to try and resolve the problem. You may wish to involve an advocate, friend or someone else to support at any stage. However, they should not be someone directly involved in the matter being investigated. If a sign language or community language interpreter is needed, please let the person dealing with the complaint know and every reasonable effort will be made to provide it.

You can contact Carers First the following ways:

Email: hello@carersfirst.org.uk

Phone: 0300 303 1555

Write: Michael Gill Building, 4 Tolgate Lane, Strood, Kent ME2 4TG

Stage One – Making A Complaint

If you want to make a complaint, you should contact Carers First using the above routes. An appropriate and impartial manager will be appointed to look into the complaint and respond to you **within 5 working days** (exceptionally may be extended to 15 working days). They may need to contact you to find out more about the complaint so that it can be dealt with appropriately.

If you are not satisfied with the response received, or wish to pursue your complaint formally then Stage Two should be used.

Stage Two – Investigation

Formal complaints should be made in writing and addressed to the Director of Services or to the Chief Executive if the complaint is relating to the Director of Services. For ease you may request a complaints form, or download one from our website.

A Designated Manager will be appointed to oversee the complaints process and be your point of contact. They will acknowledge receipt of your complaint (via letter or email) **within five working days** and appoint an Investigating Officer.

The Investigating Officer will undertake an investigation which may include interviewing you and will contact you directly to arrange a suitable time.

The Investigating Officer will complete an Investigation Report and forward to the Designated Officer who will make a decision to dismiss or uphold all / part of the complaint. They will provide you with a written reply with details of the investigation and any proposed actions

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within 15 working days of the formal complaint being received. In some cases it may not be possible to keep to this timeframe and if this is the case the Designated Manager will contact you as soon as possible to discuss this with you.

If appropriate, a further meeting will be offered to discuss the outcome of the investigation.

Stage Three – Appeal

If the outcome of the investigation at stage two is not acceptable to you, you can appeal in writing within 10 days of receiving our written response.

An Appeal Manager will be appointed and make recommendations as necessary to the Director of Services or Chief Executive if appropriate. In cases of a complaint against the Chief Executive, to the Board of Trustees. In cases of a complaint against a Trustee, to the Chair or Vice Chair.

The Director of Services, Chief Executive Officer or appointed Trustee will send you a written reply with details of any further proposed actions **within 10 working days** of the appeal being received. If appropriate, a further meeting will be offered to discuss the outcome of the investigation.

Further Action

In the event you are still not being satisfied with the decision then this will exhaust all relevant stages within Carers First. We will advise you of any external agencies you may complain to.

Comments and Compliments

If you wish to make a comment or compliment you can contact Carers First the following ways:

Email: hello@carersfirst.org.uk

Phone: 0300 303 1555

Write: Michael Gill Building, 4 Tolgate Lane, Strood, Kent ME2 4TG

Carers First recognises that when people have taken the time to offer a comment or compliment their contribution should be acknowledged with a response either verbally or written.

Information relating to comments or compliments will be made known to staff and volunteers where it is relevant to:

- Making changes to the way services are delivered
- Acknowledging and giving praise for good work

Information about all comments and compliments received and the action taken in response will be recorded.