

**Complaints, Compliments, and Comments Policy**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Mind is committed to providing the best possible service for everyone who we support and work with. We recognise that the way we manage and respond to complaints, compliments and comments is an important part of this. By receiving feedback from the people who use our services, we can make sure that we did the best we can in the context of what we are funded to do. And if we’ve done something not as well as they would have liked, we need to know that too. Only then can we learn and improve.

This policy uses the following definitions:

* a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a standard of service
* a compliment is an expression of praise concerning a service received
* a comment is a suggestion for how a service can be improved

Complaints, compliments, and comments can be raised by users of our services, carers and/or others acting on behalf of a current or potential user of any of the services normally provided by the organisation.

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 compliment.

**2. Principles**

The way we manage comments, compliments and complaints will be:

* Honest, constructive and open
* Timely, dealing with feedback as quickly and effectively as we can
* Consistent and fair, avoiding bias
* Sensitive, with due care being paid to individual differences and needs
* Respectful, making sure anyone giving feedback is kept informed of progress
* Accessible, ensuring appropriate support is in place to enable participation
* Confidential – we cannot respond to any complaints, compliments or comments that are anonymous, but confidentiality will be respected at all times as set out in this policy

We recognise the importance of the availability of support for people when making complaints, comments or compliments. Northamptonshire Mind staff and volunteers will be able to provide support to enable complainants to understand and follow the procedure.

However, advocacy support from Northamptonshire Mind cannot be given to someone making a complaint against Northamptonshire Mind. This is because it could be argued there was a conflict of interest. At any stage a complainant may seek advocacy support from an external agency.

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Northamptonshire Minds services. Complaints may come from any other person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in our service.

Complaints can be made about anything that gives an individual cause for concern. This might include:

* Behaviour of an employee, volunteers or other users
* The standard of service provided
* Discrimination
* Provision of inaccurate information
* Policies that are found to be unacceptable

**3. POLICY STATEMENT**

Northamptonshire Mind believes that it is essential there is a clear, effective and easily understandable procedure through which any complaint can be dealt with. Any complaint will be considered using our procedures as set out below.

Northamptonshire Mind welcomes complaints and suggestions so that, wherever possible, concerns can be addressed, and improvements made. Anyone has the right to complain where services are not meeting their expectations. The organisation will ensure that a full and fair hearing is given to the complaint.

Certain principles will be followed during all stages of a complaint:

* Confidentiality is protected. This will include protecting the confidentiality of all parties involved.
* Independent investigation. Where an investigation is required, it will be carried out by someone who was not involved in any way with any incident related to the complaint.
* Support and advocacy. People making a complaint may be represented by an advocate (that is, someone of your choice to help you) at any stage of the procedure.

The issues may be dealt with informally to begin with but if it is not resolved, complainants should be encouraged to use the formal procedures laid down in this policy.

Given that complaints may range from minor problems to very serious issues, we have designed a flexible procedure to resolve problems as quickly as possible, but which also ensures complaints are taken seriously.

The policy is in place to protect service users’ rights and to ensure that no one has to suffer any situation where those rights are abused.

The policy is also designed to ensure that our work with external agencies and members of the public is conducted to professional and acceptable standards.

Before using this procedure, we would encourage you to attempt to resolve any problems through discussion with a member of staff. If you do not feel this is appropriate or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome you can follow the complaint procedure detailed below.

**WHO CAN COMPLAIN?**

* People who use Northamptonshire Mind services
* General Public (including friends, family, carers and advocates of people who use Northamptonshire Mind services)
* External agencies and contractors

**EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS**

Employees and volunteers may from time to time feel they have cause to complain about their treatment, they should not use the complaints procedure but should, instead, use the Grievance Procedure.

**CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY**

The family and friends of service users have a right to complain about Northamptonshire Minds’ services. However, whilst complaints will be dealt with as empathetically as possible, the organisation is obliged to give due regard to the confidentiality of the service user involved.

Northamptonshire Mind is unable to investigate anonymous complaints. Complainants should be advised that it is not possible to investigate allegations against employees or volunteers unless the complainant is prepared to make those allegations at a formal enquiry.

**ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND ADVOCACY**

If you have additional requirements, please notify us via the complaints form or at the point of initial contact; we will consider your requirements and make appropriate arrangements to meet your needs.

The complainant has the right to elect to talk to an independent advocate. This person should provide the complainant with support and, if necessary, assist in presentation of the case.

**3. PROCEDURES**

**COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

Complaints must be made as close to the time of the ‘incident’ as possible, and not normally later than six months after the ‘incident’.

Complaints can be made via email, telephone, verbally or in writing.

**Stage 1**

If you have cause for complaint, contact a member of staff, Service Manager, or Department Manager, who will offer to arrange a telephone call or meeting to discuss the problem.

If this is not appropriate, or you feel unable to discuss your complaint with the staff of the service,

you should proceed to Stage 2 and bring the matter to the attention of the Service Manager.

**Response**

An appropriate staff member will offer to call you or meet you as soon as possible, and within five working days to discuss the complaint.

The outcome of the meeting will be sent to you in writing within ten working days. You will be notified of any exceptions to these time scales in writing.

At this stage you should decide whether you are satisfied with the result of the discussion and the

action to be taken. If you are not satisfied, you should proceed to Stage 2.

**Stage 2**

You should contact the Service Manager or HR Advisor. A letter outlining your complaint may be requested.

If this is not appropriate or you feel unable to discuss your complaint with the Service Manager, proceed to Stage 3.

**Response**

The Service Manager/Senior Manager will offer to call you, or meet you, as soon as possible and within ten working days to discuss the complaint. The outcome of the meeting will be sent to you in writing within ten working days. You will be notified of any exceptions to this in writing.

You should now decide whether you are satisfied with the result of the discussion and the action to

be taken. If you are not satisfied, you can appeal for further consideration of the complaint at a

final stage.

**Stage 3**

You should send your appeal to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Northamptonshire Mind. A letter outlining your complaint will be requested.

If it is not appropriate to send you appeal to the CEO you should make your complaint in writing to

the Chair of the Board of Trustees at Northamptonshire Mind.

**Response**

A letter will be sent to you explaining the process within 15 working days of receipt of your complaint.

**COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS**

Northamptonshire Mind recognises that when people have taken the time to offer a comment or compliment their contribution should be acknowledged with a response. Anyone making a comment or compliment will receive a written communication summarising the nature of their comment or compliment and how we have responded. If written communication does not meet the individual’s access needs an alternative form of communication will be used.

The identity of persons making comments or compliments will not be made known beyond those directly involved in the complaints, comments, and compliments procedure.

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
* Giving praise for good work where it has been requested for this to be done

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

**Follow-up actions and lessons learned**

All data from complaints, comments and compliments will be discussed by the Leadership Team within Northamptonshire Mind. Action Plans will identify what changes or improvements have been made to ensure that lessons are learnt and that similar issues are not raised again.

The Board will review annually the Central Log of complaints, comments and compliments to look for trends and issues and check the organisation’s performance against this policy. The Northamptonshire Mind Leadership Team will support the Board in this process.

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