

Scottish autism

WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Complaints Handling Policy

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DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Author/Editor	Summary of Changes	Version No.
Oct 2009	G Murray	Draft Submission	1
Oct 2010	L Currie	Draft Review Update	2
Aug 2013	L Currie	Policy Update	3
Jul 2016	K Gracie/J McInally	Policy Review	4
Apr 2017	David Harkins/Karen Gracie	Policy Review	5
Mar 2018	Karen Gracie	Removal of Duty of Candour Information (now in own policy)	6
Jul 2020	David Harkins	Policy Review	7

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CONSULTATION AND RATIFICATION SCHEDULE

Name of Consultative Body	Date of Approval
Board of Trustees	6 th October 2020
Senior Management Team	28 th August 2020
Policy Group	31 st July 2020

CROSS REFERENCE TO OTHER POLICIES / STRATEGIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with:	Detail
Risk Policy	
Data Protection & FOI Policy	
Tobacco, Nicotine and Care Act (Scotland) 2016	Detail on the "Duty of Candour"
Appendices 1 - 4	Complaint Handling Procedure Complaints Flowchart Making a fundraising Complaint How to make a complaint flier

EQUALITY & PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Log Number: 2020/22	Date completed: 21/7/2020
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KEYWORDS

Complaints, Investigation, Information, Resolution, customer, complainant

Contents

1. POLICY STATEMENT	1
2. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?.....	1
3. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?	2
4. MAKING A COMPLAINT	2
5. POLICY REVIEW STATEMENT	3

APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Complaint Handling Procedures
Appendix 2	Complaints Flowchart
Appendix 3	Making a Fundraising Complaint
Appendix 4	“How to make a complaint” flier

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Scottish Autism is committed to ensuring its services are of the highest quality. We welcome feedback from all stakeholders so we can improve or recognise and learn from positive or outstanding experiences. A formal complaints handling procedure enables Scottish Autism to respond clearly and properly to complaints and to know when and why people are not satisfied with services, so we can improve them.

This policy and procedure reflects Scottish Autism's commitment to valuing complaints. It seeks to resolve customer dissatisfaction as closely as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of customer complaints so evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case can be made. (For the purposes of this policy, customer may include supported individuals, family member, social worker and other professionals, Scottish Autism staff and the general public).

Good complaints handling includes providing joint responses to complaints whenever they relate to more than one service. This policy and procedure gives staff information and guidance on how and when to do this, ensuring our customers get a comprehensive response to their complaints whenever this is possible including an apology. Our complaints handling procedure will enable us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and help prevent the same problem from happening again.

For staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the customers' views and experience and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. Handled well, complaints can give our customers a form of redress when things go wrong. This policy and procedure will help us do our job better, improve relationships with our customers and enhance public perception of Scottish Autism. It will help us keep supported individuals at the heart of the process while enabling us to better understand how to improve our services by learning from complaints.

The Chief Executive (CE) of Scottish Autism and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for the efficient operation of this complaints policy and procedure. Responsibility for carrying out investigations of complaints may be delegated to appropriate managers of Scottish Autism, under the authority of the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team.

All complaints will be recorded and stored securely in ThankQ system. All complaints will be reported through performance management systems and serious complaints must be escalated to the appropriate manager or Senior Leadership Team and/or Board of Trustees as soon as possible. The Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees will monitor any trends in complaints.

This policy covers both external and internal complaints handling.

2. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is when someone tells us that they are not happy with our services. It is an expression of dissatisfaction, either written or spoken, about our action or lack of

action or about the way the complainant has been treated or about the standard of service provided.

3. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Anyone/group is entitled to make a complaint and this is not restricted to the customer, i.e. supported individuals, family member, social worker and other professionals and the general public. Scottish Autism workers should refer to the grievance policy for guidance around raising issues.

Sometimes a supported individual may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint on their own. Scottish Autism will accept complaints from third parties, which may include relatives, friends and advocates. The third party should, where possible, obtain consent from the supported individual. In certain circumstances, the third party may raise a complaint without receiving consent, such as when there are concerns relating to an individual's wellbeing.

Supported individuals may want to use the easy read version "Making a Complaint" located within their Support/Child Plans.

4. MAKING A COMPLAINT

4.1 Stage 1 – Informal, frontline resolution

For all external complaints these should be directed to the appropriate local staff/manager(s) to investigate. Informal complaints should be resolved within 7 working days whenever possible.

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally with local staff and managers, the complaint should be escalated to Stage 2.

For supported individual's complaints, supported individuals should follow the Making a Complaint guidance within the service agreement/child's plan. To support supported individuals to make a complaint, please refer to the Support Plan. For third parties making complaints, complaints should be submitted to keyworkers and local managers.

4.2 Stage 2 – Formally registering a complaint, investigation required

Complaints that cannot be resolved, should progress to Stage 2.

Complaints should be submitted to the Regional Manager/Residences Manager/Head Teacher or other relevant managers who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated.

Complaints will be acknowledged, by letter, within 7 working days and a full written response will be provided within 20 working days from receipt of the complaint. The response provide by Scottish Autism should include:

- Details of the investigation.
- A decision about whether the complaint was upheld or not.
- The reason for the decision.

- The redress, if appropriate, which will be offered, eg, an apology, additional help or signposting to other sources of advice or support.
- Any other action that may be taken in light of the complaint.
- If it is not possible to provide a full answer to your complaint within 20 working days, the letter will outline reasons why and give a date by which a full answer is expected.

4.3 Stage 3 – Appeals

An Appeals Panel, normally of two members, will be convened to consider the appeal. The CE and senior managers will be responsible for ensuring the panel is appropriately representative. Panel membership will be restricted to people who have had no previous involvement in the complaint.

Members of the Appeals Panel will:

- read through the necessary papers
- speak to relevant individuals involved with the complaint
- make a final decision.

The Chair of the Appeals Panel will provide an outcome, in writing, within 28 working days of receiving your appeal, which will include:

- the final decision about the complaint
- the reason for the decision
- if appropriate, the redress which will be offered to you e.g. an apology, additional help or directing to other sources of advice or support
- any action that may be taken in light of the complaint.

In circumstances where time limits cannot be met due to unforeseen circumstances, complainants will be notified in writing. The reasons for the delay with adjusted timescales will be supplied by the person responsible for handling the complaints.

If a complaint is made about a director, then it should be sent directly to the Chief Executive. If a complaint is about the Chief Executive, then it should be sent to the Chair of the Board of Trustees (marked private and confidential) and addressed to Scottish Autism, Hilton House, Alloa Business Park, Whins Road, Alloa, FK10 3SA. The Board is ultimately responsible as trustees of Scottish Autism to look into complaints.

5. POLICY REVIEW STATEMENT

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if legislatively or operationally required.