

Complaints Procedure

This procedure deals with complaints from users of our services or others about these services, including the conduct of employees, volunteers or sessional workers.

We treat as a complaint any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response. We listen to complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our service.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

Our policy covers complaints about:

- the standard of service we provide
- the behaviour of our staff
- any action or lack of action by staff affecting an individual or group

Our complaints policy does not cover:

- matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure
- anonymous complaints

All complaints will be reviewed to assess whether there are lessons to be learnt about how we can improve the quality and appropriateness of services.

Our standards for handling complaints

- we treat all complaints seriously, whether they are made by letter or by email
- complainants will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times - we expect too that complainants will be courteous and fair in their dealings with our staff at all times
- we will treat any complaint in confidence within the organisation
- we will deal with any complaint promptly
- if we cannot send a full reply within this time frame we will tell the complainant the reason why and let them know when we will be able to reply in full

How to complain

1. Informal process

This is the first opportunity for Carers Network to resolve anything a complainant is dissatisfied with, and the majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage. Any complaint should be raised with the relevant member of staff or their line manager. If an employee of Carer network feels that a complaint is being raised (even if this is not explicit) they must:

- a. note a note of it on Carers Network database and
- b. pass onto their line manager to deal with it
- c. the line manager will then contact the complainant within five working days of receiving the initial complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied they should be:

- a. informed of their right to make their complaint formally and
- b. given a copy of this complaints policy.

2. Formal process

To make a formal complaint the complainant must write to Carers Network at the Beethoven Centre, London, W10 4JL or by email: info@carers-network.org.uk. The written complaint should be clearly marked as such.

Please note - complaints handed in at support groups or events may take longer to reach the relevant officer.

On receipt of a formal complaint:

1. Carers Network Admin team will log the complaint and pass to the CEO or a suitable deputy
2. The complainant will be contacted by the CEO or a suitable deputy within seven working days of them receiving the formal written complaint in order to discuss the issue further
3. The CEO or suitable deputy will then investigate the complaint with the relevant employee
4. The CEO or the suitable deputy will provide the complainant with a written response to their complaint within five working days of speaking to them.

If a formal complaint is about the CEO, it will be taken directly to the Chairperson of the Board and dealt with by her/him, within the same timeframes as the formal procedure above. Any such complaints should be made in writing to the Chair of Trustees (c/o Carers Network, the Beethoven Centre, as above) the Chair will investigate the complaint and make a written response to the complainant.

Appealing any response

The CEO's decision is final, except in the case of a complaint related to a Westminster, H&F or K&C council-contracted service. In these cases the complainant may take further action and should be advised by Carers Network as follows:

If you remain dissatisfied with this response you may contact the Council's Customer Feedback Team on 0800 587 0072 who will facilitate a further review of your concerns, if possible. Alternatively, you have the right to take this complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman can be contacted at The Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH, telephone 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983. You can find out how to use the Ombudsman service by visiting their website www.lgo.org.uk/

Even if a carer makes a complaint which is found not to be justified he/she will not be treated any differently from other carers in terms of the service they can receive from us. They may continue to have access to the services of Carers Network if they so wish.