

# Complaints Policy and Procedure

## Introduction

Warwickshire Vision Support recognises that service users may from time to time be concerned and dissatisfied about the service they have received, and also recognises that such concerns and complaints must be taken seriously and dealt with expeditiously and sympathetically. This policy has therefore been produced in recognition of the rights of service users to complain when dissatisfied, and in appreciation of the time and effort that this often involves for both clients and staff.

## Verbal Complaints

Complaints are most likely to be initiated with front line staff. Verbal complaints should be dealt with promptly in an informal and sensitive manner by the most appropriate staff on the spot and recorded in writing to their line manager. Where the recipient of the complaint is unable to give the assurances that the complainant is looking for, then the complaint should be recorded and referred onto the CEO.

Where a verbal complaint is considered to be sufficiently serious or difficult to resolve, the acknowledgement and written response procedure set out in the next section should apply.

## Written complaints

All written complaints should be acknowledged in writing within five working days. All written complaints received must be notified to the CEO.

A copy of the written response to the complaint should be drafted and submitted to the CEO. The final response to the complainant will be sent under the signature of the CEO within 10 working days.

If the full response cannot be completed within 10 working days, an interim response should be sent by the recipient of the complaint informing the complainant of the delay, the reasons for it and the likely timescale for resolving the complaint.

## Investigation Procedure

- All complaints, whether verbal or in writing, are recorded electronically, filed on Warwickshire Vision's Sharepoint system and directed to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer, or in the event of holiday or sickness absence, a nominated member of the management team.

The information captured includes:

- The name and address of the complainant, contact details and the date and time of the complaint.

- Details of the complaint and if appropriate, the details of any witnesses or third parties who may be consulted as part of an investigation
- An acknowledgement of the complaint if in writing, will be made within five working days with an explanation of the process that will be taken to investigate the complaint and timescales for a response.
- The Chief Executive Officer will undertake the necessary investigation to establish the foundation of the complaint, to identify what corrective actions are necessary if the complaint is to be upheld, and what lessons can be learnt from the matter.
- A response to the complaint will always be made within 10 working days and the complaint record updated to record the outcome of the complaint and the date and time of the response.
- If the matter of complaint is complex or key people who are needed to contribute to the investigation are unavailable, contact will be made with the complainant within 10 working days advising of the extended delay in finalising the matter.
- If the client is satisfied with the response, then the matter is closed on the complaint system.
- If the client is dissatisfied with this response, then the complaint will be referred to the Chair of the Board of Trustees for further investigation and action.
- The Board will report on the complaint within 10 working days of the date of the referral to the Chair.
- If the client remains unhappy with the findings, they will be advised they have the right to refer the matter to the local authority (as service commissioners) or directly to the Local Authority Ombudsman.
- A complaint against the Chief Executive will be directed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees from the outset.

## Time Limits

The time limits for making a complaint will normally be within 6 months of the event giving rise to the complaint, or within 6 months of discovering the problem, provided this is within twelve months of the incident. There is discretion to extend this time limit where it would be unreasonable for the complaint to have been made earlier, and where it is still possible to investigate the facts of the case.

## Independent Review

### Request for Independent Review

Complainants who remain dissatisfied may request for an independent review panel either verbally or in writing within 28 calendar days. Any such request should be passed onto the Board of Trustees.

## Disciplinary and other related matters

If the complaint received indicates prima facie need for referral to any of the following:

- An investigation under the disciplinary procedures
- An investigation of a criminal offence.

The person in receipt of the complaint should at once pass the relevant information to the line manager, who will inform the CEO so that appropriate action may be taken.

The complaints procedure will not deal with matters which are the subject of disciplinary investigation. If such action is initiated, the complainant should be advised accordingly, so that appropriate action under the Complaints Procedure can be pursued in respect of matters raised in the complaint which do not relate to disciplinary investigation.

If a complaint reveals a prima facie case of negligence, or if it is thought that there is a likelihood of legal action being taken, the person in receipt of the complaint should inform the CEO straight away. The Complaints Procedure should cease if the complainant explicitly indicates an intention to take legal action in respect of the complaint.

## Publicity

This policy will be made available on the organisation's website to the public, to staff on the organisation's Sharepoint and made available to all on request.

## Useful Numbers

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## Version control

The table below shows the history of the document:

Version Number	Author & Job Title	Date
V.1		April 2017
V.2	Deborah Kerrison Finance & Admin Manager	Aug 2022
V.3	Rebecca Bourton Community Services Manager	July 2023