

Comments, compliments & complaints policy

April 2023

Introduction

Healthwatch Cornwall (HC) takes user satisfaction very seriously and is committed to offering the highest possible standards of service provision. Only by understanding where we are performing well or not so well can we improve our services. Therefore, we set out to ensure that all users are aware of the importance of their feedback, be it good or not so good and also of their right to make a complaint should they feel the service they have received is unsatisfactory.

Principles

- 2.1 The Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy should be prominently displayed in our office and available on our website.
- 2.2 In the event of a person wishing to make a complaint against HC, a copy of the procedure should be given to them.
- 2.3. All staff, volunteers and members should be aware of the existence of the policy and procedure for giving feedback and / or making a complaint
NB. This procedure is not intended for use by employees who should use our grievance or whistleblowing procedures.

All feedback is taken seriously and, where appropriate, is used to inform change at both an operational and strategic level in line with our Quality Assurance policy.

If someone wishes to offer feedback or suggestions concerning areas for service improvement or if they would like to offer positive feedback on the service they have received, they can:

- 2.5.1 Visit our website <https://www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk/contact-us>
- 2.5.2 Email enquiries@healthwatchcornwall.co.uk
- 2.5.3 Telephone 0800 0381 281

All contact from members of the public is dealt with according to our [privacy policy](#) and in line with current GDPR regulations.

HC will take appropriate action to investigate any complaint, keep the complainant informed at each stage, and work towards reaching a satisfactory conclusion. In many cases the complaint can be dealt with easily and, once a dialogue is opened, an answer can be found. Some situations may require a more thorough investigation but, whatever the outcome, service delivery will be examined and, if necessary, recommendations made.

Our Standards for Handling Complaints

- 3.1 We treat all complaints seriously, however they are received.
- 3.2 You will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times. We would hope, you too, will be courteous and fair in your dealings with our employees at all times.

- 3.3 We will treat your complaint in confidence however, it is likely that in order to fully investigate a complaint your details will need to be shared with relevant employees.
- 3.4 We ask that outline your complaint as clearly as possible and to specify what outcome you would like as a result of your complaint.
- 3.5 At any stage you can have support from a friend, carer or agency (e.g. advocate). If you need support to arrange this, we can provide details of advocacy organisations and help you to make contact with them. Interpreters can also be arranged if required.
- 3.6 If your complaint alleges harassment or abuse, the response will follow procedures as set out in policy guidance relating to harassment and safeguarding.

Overview and Timescales

- 4.1 At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much detail as possible, including any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure.

We aim to:

- 4.2.1 Acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days. Offer a time to discuss with you within a further 10 working days
- 4.2.3 Provide a full written response within a further 10 working days.
- 4.3 If for any reason the complaint will take longer to investigate and respond to, we will keep you fully informed.
- 4.4 Particular care will be taken to identify any issues that are subject to other statutory or HC procedures and policies, such as Child Safeguarding, Adult Safeguarding, Racial Harassment etc, that may come to light during the investigation.
- 4.5 Our response aims to offer:
- 4.5.1 An acknowledgement that the complaint was/is taken seriously;
- 4.5.2 An outline of the decision;
- 4.5.3 The right of appeal
- 4.6 It may also include any of the following as appropriate to the circumstances:
- 4.6.1 An apology;
- 4.6.2 An undertaking to learn from the complaint and to take steps to make sure such an event is not repeated (for example a review of policy or practice);
- 4.6.3 Compensation for any small financial loss (for example, for lost or damaged property).

Three Stage Process

5.1 Stage 1

A complaint at this stage can be made in person, by telephone, email or letter, or via the website. The complaint will be considered by a member of the management team.

5.2 Stage 2

If you feel the investigation has not considered all the relevant information, or you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) by telephone, email or letter **within ten days** of receiving the response at Stage 1.

The CEO will receive all the correspondence that has been gathered at stage 1 and will examine this to make sure that all procedures have been followed correctly. They will also liaise with the original Investigator to ensure they are satisfied that the original complaint was, understood fully, investigated thoroughly and responded to appropriately.

5.3 Stage 3

If you feel the investigation has not considered all the relevant information, or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, you may refer your complaint to Stage 3. This can be done by telephone, email or letter to the Business Support Manager **within ten days** of receiving the response from stage 2, who will pass this to the Chair of the Board of Directors.

A panel of Directors (normally 2) will consider the way the complaint has been investigated and handled by the organisation and make a decision as to whether the outcome is fair and appropriate.

The panel will either uphold the complaint and/or direct a different remedy to that decided upon at stage 1 or 2; or confirm the previous decision.

Where applicable, the Board of Directors will make recommendations to review or change the organisation's policies or procedures.

The Board of Directors' decision is final.

If you remain dissatisfied, you are at liberty to contact service commissioners or registration bodies such as the CQC, but there is no further right of appeal within the organisation. Links to relevant organisational websites can be found on the service page of the service you wish to complain about.

Exceptions

- 6.1 Complaints will always initially be processed at stage 1 except in the event of a complaint about the CEO which should be made to the Board of Directors (Stage 3) who can be contacted via admin@healthwatchcornwall.co.uk. The timescales referred to in section 3. above will still apply.

Monitoring and Review of compliments and complaints

7.1 Information gathered regarding complaints will be collated into an annual Compliments and Complaints to be presented to the Board. This will also be available on our website www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk and our Annual Report, and will incorporate numbers received, how we dealt with them and relevant action plans.

Specific complaints considered by the management team and outcomes will be brought to the Board on an individual basis.

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