



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Deafness Resource Centre is committed to providing an excellent service to its clients and other stakeholders, working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. We have developed a Complaints Policy and Procedure that explains our approach to receiving complaints.

Our Aim

The Deafness Resource Centre aims to resolve complaints quickly, fairly and effectively. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve the services that we provide is by listening and responding to the views of our clients, partners and stakeholders and in particular responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

We aim to ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we deal with it promptly, politely and when appropriate confidentially;
- we will respond in the correct way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology or information on any action taken;
- we will learn from complaints and use them to improve the services that we offer;
- we review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

Deafness Resource Centre recognises that many concerns raised will be informal, and we aim to deal with these quickly. In the first instance we would expect any complaint to be raised directly with the member of staff concerned. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Definition

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with our services; whether justified or not; with Deafness Resource Centre, with a member of staff, or with a Deafness Resource Centre Trustee, that relates to Deafness Resource Centre and that requires a formal response

Purpose

Deafness Resource Centre's complaint procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

Deafness Resource Centre's responsibility will be to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take appropriate action if required;



The complainant's responsibility is to:

- raise their concerns promptly and directly with the person concerned and if their concerns cannot be resolved satisfactorily informally, then to follow the formal complaints procedure as detailed;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow Deafness Resource Centre a reasonable amount of time to deal with the matter as detailed in the formal complaints procedure;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond Deafness Resource Centre's control.

Monitoring and Reporting

Trustees of Deafness Resource Centre will receive regularly an anonymized report of complaints made and their resolution.

Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and Deafness Resource Centre maintain confidentiality. However the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality. Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Principles of the Complaints Policy

- The Deafness Resource Centre Complaints policy is based on the principle of a three stage process (as detailed in the Complaints Procedure).
- The Complaints Policy will apply to all the services that Deafness Resource Centre provides.
- If at any time during the investigation of a complaint matters arise that warrant investigation under disciplinary proceedings, or through a criminal investigation, the complaints procedure will be suspended until those investigations are concluded. Similarly, the complaints procedure should be suspended if a complainant is actively seeking legal redress.
- Where a complaint is against a member of staff they should be informed of the support services available to them.
- The Chief Officer should be informed of the receipt of a Stage 1 formal complaint. A complete record of the entire process should be kept. A copy of all reports, transcripts of interviews and other relevant information should be forwarded to the Chief Officer for immediate review by the line manager.
- Deafness Resource Centre may, at any stage of the formal complaints procedure, review a complaint and give a decision, without a formal investigation, where a member of the Senior Management Team deem the complaint to be deliberately repetitive or vexatious. Examples of such complaints being unsubstantiated or repetitive complaints against an individual or service, or where a complaint has previously been investigated and appropriate action taken.
- When appealing against a previous decision, the complainant will be asked to state why they are dissatisfied with how their complaint was handled.



Deafness Resource Centre Formal Complaints Procedure

1. Stage 1

1.1. If you are unable to resolve the issue informally and wish to make a formal complaint you should request a copy of Deafness Resource Centre's formal Complaints Policy and Procedure from the line manager of the member of staff concerned. This will be sent to you on the day of request. If we hear nothing further from you 28 calendar days from this date we will regard the complaint to be closed.

1.2. Upon receipt of Deafness Resource Centre's Complaints Policy and Procedure, you should write a formal letter of complaint to the line manager of the member of staff or service area concerned.

1.3. In your letter you should set out the details of your complaint, the consequences for you as a result, and the remedy you are seeking.

1.4. You can expect the complaint to be acknowledged within 4 working days of receipt. You should get a response and an explanation within **10 working days**. The written response will also notify the complainant that they have 28 days in which to ask for the complaint and response to be reviewed (stage 2); if they are dissatisfied with the response they have received.

1.5. If you are unsure which member of Deafness Resource Centre staff to write to, your complaint should be addressed to the Chief Officer at the Deafness Resource Centre.

1.6. Our contact details are:

Deafness Resource Centre,

32-40 Dentons Green Lane

St Helens

WA10 2QB

Telephone number 01744 23887.

Website address www.deafnessresourcecentre.org

2. Stage 2

2.1. If you are dissatisfied with the **stage 1** response to your complaint, then you have the option to write to the Chief Officer stating the reason why you are dissatisfied with the outcome and ask for your complaint and the response to be given further consideration. You can expect your request to be acknowledged within 4 working days of receipt, describing the process the complaint investigation will follow.

2.2. A stage 2 complaint will be co-ordinated by a member of the **Senior Management Team**, or other delegated senior member of staff, who will respond within 20 working days with a full written response giving details of any right of appeal.



2.3. Deafness Resource Centre's aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible, however, if a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

3. Stage 3

3.1. If you are not satisfied with the response from **stage 2**, you then have the option of asking for a review of your complaint in writing to the Chief Officer of Deafness Resource Centre, stating the reason why you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint. You should do this within 10 days of receiving the written response from stage 2.

3.2. The Chief Officer in conjunction with the **Chair of the Board of Trustees** will respond normally within 5 working days to inform you of the action which will be taken to investigate the complaint, and the expected timescale of the investigation. If your original complaint was against the Chief Officer then the **Chair and the Vice-chair** of the relevant sub-committee, will handle the final appeal stage.

3.3. The relevant history of the complaint will be made available to the Chief Officer or Chair so that a full investigation can be carried out. That investigation may include interviews with the complainant, any staff involved, and any witnesses and will also include documentation evidence where appropriate.

3.4. The outcome of the investigation will be communicated to the complainant in writing with details of any action taken and a time-scale for implementation (if applicable and appropriate). All appropriate members of staff will also receive a copy of this report, which will also be presented to the Board of Trustees.

3.5. Should a complainant still be dissatisfied with the outcome they should be informed of their right to seek legal redress or to make representation to any appropriate statutory body.

3.6. Appropriate staff concerned should report back to the Chief Officer within ten days of their receipt of the outcome of the Stage 3 complaint, explaining how they have implemented any recommendations.