

Feedback and Complaints

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Contents

Policy	3
Policy Statement.....	3
Definitions	3
Legislation	3
Aims	3
Principles	4
Implementation	4
Responsibility And Accountability	4
Training	5
Monitoring And Review.....	5
Procedure	6
1. Introduction	6
2. Feedback about our services	6
3. Complaining about our services	6
3.1. Who can make a complaint?.....	6
3.2. Making a complaint.....	7
3.3. Dealing with a Complaint	8
4. Complaints about a Carers Trust’s Network Partner	9
5. Complaints about Carers Trust by a Network Partner	10
6. Recording formal complaints	10
7. Annual Complaints Report.....	10
Document Information	11
Feedback and Complaint Handling – Staff Guidance	12

Policy

Policy Statement

Carers Trust is committed to providing high quality services and to continuous service improvement, but we realise that maintaining and improving standards is dependent on feedback from our Network Partners, unpaid carers, other partners, and those who engage with us.

Carers Trust values and encourages constructive feedback, both positive and negative, about our activities. We believe that open and transparent handling of complaints and being informed about what we do well leads to better outcomes.

We want complaints to be heard, understood and respected. The ethos of 'getting it right first time' underpins this policy, with an emphasis on responding to complaints effectively and within reasonable timeframes.

This policy is for use by third parties who wish to communicate feedback and/or complaints to Carers Trust. For internal concerns or complaint, staff should consult the Grievance Procedure or the Whistleblowing Policy.

Our [Complaints Handling Procedure](#) details how different types and levels of complaint should be handled.

Definitions

Complaint - A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, either written or spoken. A complaint can be made by an individual or a group. An individual or an organisation may wish to complain if they are not satisfied with the way they have been treated or with the service they have received from Carers Trust.

A complaint may not always be clearly described by the complainant as a 'complaint'; nevertheless, it is apparent from that their concerns or behaviour expressed that they are complaining.

Legislation

There is no applicable legislation but the Code of Fundraising Practice states that Third-Sector Organisations '*must have a clear and publicly-available complaints procedure*'.

Aims

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- To provide a straightforward means of raising a complaint.
- To ensure an efficient, effective, standardised and fair complaints procedure.
- To ensure that complaints will be fairly considered and appropriate action taken.

Principles

When Carers Trust receives a complaint, we will handle it in accordance with the following principles:

- We will use feedback and complaints constructively to improve our quality of service.
- All complaints will be taken seriously.
- The complaint will be investigated fairly and openly.
- Complainants will receive relevant and proportionate responses to their complaints.
- We will comply with legislation on data protection when responding to complaints.
- Feedback and complaints will be dealt with in confidence. The only exception to this is when others could be put at risk by matters referred to in the complaint.
- Anyone who is not happy with the response to a complaint may appeal or to be refer their complaint to the Charity Commission (England and Wales) or the Scottish Charity Regulator (Scotland).

Implementation

This policy is implemented by:

- Making it widely known that Carers Trust encourages feedback on our services. We do this by publicising this Policy and our Feedback and Complaints Procedure on our website and by providing a copy of our Complaints Policy and Procedure to anyone who asks for it.
- Ensuring staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to Feedback and Complaints.
- Having clear Procedures for handling complaints and gathering feedback.
- Maintaining a record of feedback and complaints and acting on them where possible to improve the quality of our services.

Responsibility And Accountability

Chief Executive – The Chief Executive is responsible for the implementation of the Feedback and Complaints Policy and for delegating complaints to appropriate members of the Leadership Team.

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Executive Director of Fundraising and Business Development – Responsible for handling and, if necessary, investigating complaints related to the organisation's Fundraising and Marketing activities and replying to complainants.

Executive Director of Programmes, Policy and Impact – Responsible for handling and, if necessary investigating, complaints from Network Partners or which are related to our Programme and Policy activity and replying to complainants.

Executive Director of Corporate Services – Responsible for maintaining oversight of the organisation's Feedback and Complaints Policy and maintaining a Complaints Register. May also assist with investigating complaints and replying to complainants.

All Staff – Have a responsibility to identify when a complaint is being made, informing relevant management of the complaint and, if necessary, assisting with an investigation.

Training

All staff will be made aware of this policy through their Employee Handbook and Induction process, as well as team meetings and supervision.

Monitoring And Review

This policy and its accompanying procedure will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis.

Procedure

1. Introduction

Carers Trust is committed to ensuring that its services are of the highest quality. Our Feedback and Complaints Procedure enables Carers Trust to respond clearly and properly to complaints and to know when and why people are not satisfied with its services, so that continuous improvements can be made. To this end Carers Trust will:

- allocate someone to investigate each complaint - the investigator should be of suitable seniority to resolve the issues raised in the complaint.
- have arrangements in place to communicate with complainants by in writing.
- provide a dedicated email address specifically for receiving complaints.
- ensure the information about how to make a complaint is readily available by having the complaint procedure:
 - on the Carers Trust website (www.carers.org)
 - available on request.
 - Available internally for staff reference.

Carers Trust is happy to provide clarification around the complaints procedure, which can be obtained by contacting feedback@carers.org.

2. Feedback about our services

Feedback and compliments are valuable, welcome and important and when they are received in writing, will be recorded and acknowledged. Compliments enable Carers Trust to:

- understand that our service is being provided to our users' satisfaction.
- provide positive feedback to our staff.
- influence our organisational and service development.
- inform our quality assurance programme.

3. Complaining about our services

3.1. Who can make a complaint?

This procedure is for:

- members of the public who have received a service from Carers Trust.
- Carers Trust Network Partners and Affiliates.

This procedure is **not** for:

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- Carers Trust Staff or Volunteers, who should refer to our internal Grievance Policy or Whistleblowing Policy.
- Members of the public who wish to make a complaint about a member organisation of the Carers Trust Network or a Carers Trust affiliates. Carers trust Network Partners are independently registered charities and complaints about services you have received from them need to go directly to them. Carers Trust can only become involved in complaints about a Carers Centre or Scheme in exceptional circumstances (see **Section 4**).
- Carers Trust funders and contractors. If you have a complaint, you need to follow the procedures for complaints or disputes laid out in contracts, grants or other funding arrangements with Carers Trust.

3.2. Making a complaint

Carers Trust recognises that there will be times when our trustees, staff and volunteers make mistakes, or get things wrong. In order to learn from such mistakes we need to know about them and we welcome comments or complaints from users of our services. Such comments or complaints will always be taken seriously, recorded and responded to as detailed in **Section 3**.

To make a complaint, you can take the following action:

- If you are in contact with a member of Carers Trust staff, you should try to resolve the problem informally with them first.
- If you are not able to resolve the problem informally with a member of staff, we welcome complaints using the following methods:
 - **by email** at feedback@carers.org
 - **by post** at Carers Trust, 2-6 Boundary Row, London SE1 8HP. If your complaint is about the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive, then you need to address it to the Chief Executive. If your complaint is about the Chief Executive you should address it to the Chair of the Board of Trustees (at the same address as above, marked private and confidential).

You can complain about any aspect of Carers Trust's work.

When making a complaint, it would be helpful if you could state clearly and briefly:

- what went wrong.
- when and where any incident happened.
- who was involved.
- what you would like as a result of making a complaint (e.g. an apology or a change to how we provide our services).
- your name, address and contact details (telephone and/or email).

If your complaint is about Carers Trust then there are three stages that you can go through to try and resolve the problem (See **Section 3.3** for details).

It should be noted that Carers Trust is will not investigate the following:

- Anonymous complaints.
- A complaint which is resolved informally.
- A complaint that has already been investigated and resolved.
- Vexatious or malicious complaints. Examples of behaviour which might be regarded as vexatious includes:
 - Abusive or threatening behaviour – whether in person or in writing.
 - Persistent telephone calls, emails or letters on the same issue.
 - Persistent verbal complaints which cannot be resolved.

If you have any access requirements, please let the person dealing with the complaint know and every reasonable effort will be made to support you.

3.3. Dealing with a Complaint

3.3.1. Informal Complaints

If you are in contact with a member of Carers Trust staff, you can speak with them about your complaint. If you prefer, you can liaise with their line manager. Carers Trust staff members will inform you of who their line manager is if you ask them. If you are not satisfied, you should make a Formal Complaint by email or post as detailed in 3.3.2.

3.3.2. Formal Complaints

If you email our Feedback inbox or send us a complaint by letter, this will be registered as a formal complaint.

Once we have received your complaint we will:

- Acknowledge your complaint by letter or email within seven working days from the date it is received.
- Confirm that the matter is being investigated and let you know who is investigating the complaint and the start date of the investigation.
- Take your complaint seriously and investigate it thoroughly.

After we have investigated your complaint, you will then receive a written response within 21 working days from the start of the investigation from the person appointed to investigate the complaint. The response will include:

- A decision about whether the complaint was upheld or not.
- The reason for the decision.
- The redress, if appropriate, which will be offered to you e.g. an apology, additional help, or directing 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 21 working days, we will let you know in writing as soon as possible and give a date by which a full answer is expected from Carers Trust.

3.3.3. Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint then outline the reasons for your dissatisfaction by letter or email within seven working days of receiving it to the Chief Executive (or the Chair of the Board of Trustees if it is about the Chief Executive).

We will then convene an Appeals Panel to review the complaint and the response. An Appeals Panel will consist of three members, including at least the CEO or a trustee. The Chief Executive or the relevant trustee will be responsible for ensuring the panel is appropriately representative. As far as possible, panel membership will be restricted to people who have had no previous involvement in the complaint. Appeals can be conducted in person, remotely, or via email exchange.

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 write to you within 28 working days of receiving your appeal, to confirm:

- the final decision about the complaint
- the reason for the decision
- any action that may be taken in light of the complaint.

If it is not possible to provide to response to your appeal within 28 working days, we will let you know in writing as soon as possible and give a date by which a full answer is expected from Carers Trust.

If you're still dissatisfied following the outcome of the appeal and your complaint relates to our services in England or Wales, we would encourage you to contact the **Charity Commission** on 0845 300 0218 or at www.charity-commission.gov.uk. If your complaint relates to our services in Scotland you should contact the **Scottish Charity Regulator** at www.oscr.org.uk.

4. Complaints about a Carers Trust's Network Partner

If your complaint is about a member of the Carers Trust Network, then as each Network Partner is an independently registered charity you need to contact the organisation directly to explain that you wish to make a complaint and therefore would like to receive a copy of their complaints procedure. You should follow the Network Partner's complaints procedure as outlined.

In cases where Carers Trust receives a number of complaints about one Network Partner or judges the complaint to be so serious that it presents a potential threat to the reputation of Carers Trust and its network, Carers Trust may decide to appoint a representative to investigate the issues in accordance with the terms of the Principles of Partnership which governs relationships between Carers Trust and network members. In this case, Carers Trust will report the outcome of the investigation to you.

If you are a Network Partner wishing to complain about another Network Partner, you should seek to use the commitments made between Network Partners as set out in the Partnership Agreement to help navigate a resolution in the first instance.

5. Complaints about Carers Trust by a Network Partner

Carers Trust Network Partners wishing to make a complaint about Carers Trust should follow the process as set out in **Section 3.2** of the complaints policy but note that Network Partners as members of Carers Trust Network are bound by the Principles of Partnership.

6. Recording formal complaints

The Executive Director of Corporate Services within Carers Trust will be responsible for ensuring a record of all compliments and complaints is maintained. These will be reviewed by the Executive Team on a bi-annual basis and will inform our on-going quality improvement work. Carers Trust will maintain a complaints log to record the following information:

- details of each complaint received, including relevant dates
- the subject matter of the complaint
- details of the investigation and outcome
- details of the reasons for delay where an investigation took longer than the agreed response period agreed
- the date the report of the outcome of the investigation was sent to the complainant, and
- the details of any appeal.

Specific details which may identify individuals (including complainants or staff) will be kept strictly confidential.

The CEO will determine any reporting to the Board of Trustees.

7. Annual Complaints Report

Carers Trust will prepare an annual complaints report for each year, to be

included within our Trustees' Annual Report, in which we will:

- specify the number of formal complaints received
- specify the number of complaints that the organisation decided were well-founded, partly or fully
- specify the number of complaints that the organisation has been informed have been referred to other bodies
- give the subject matter of complaints received
- summarise any matters of importance in those complaints themselves or in the way that the complaints were handled, and
- summarise any matters where action has been or is to be taken to improve services as a consequence of those complaints.

Document Information

Document Version	Date	Author	Comments/Reason for review
0.1	April 2023	Hannah Lindley	Redevelopment of Complaints and Compliments Policy

Feedback and Complaint Handling – Staff Guidance

Introduction

It is important that all Carers Trust staff are able to identify and respond to feedback and complaints. This guidance sets out some simple tips for staff who receive feedback and/or complaints. If you have any questions about responding to feedback or a complaint, you should contact the **Executive Director of Corporate Services** for support.

Feedback

Feedback can be received verbally or in writing. If you receive a piece of feedback about our work or services, it's always good practice to thank the individual for their feedback.

If the feedback is complimentary or constructive, you may want to share this with relevant managers and individuals, as this is an opportunity to celebrate our successes or to modify our practices.

If the feedback is negative, you may want to deal with the feedback as an informal complaint.

Informal Complaints

As per [Definitions](#), a complaint is 'an expression of dissatisfaction'. A good rule of thumb is that if you perceive it as a complaint, then it should be treated as one.

All Carers Trust staff are able to resolve an informal complaint, as everyone has a role to play in finding a resolution. If you have been liaising with or working with someone who is now making a complaint, you can work with them to resolve the issue. They may ask to liaise with your line manager as well – if they ask for your line manager's details, you should share them.

If you are unable to resolve an informal complaint, you can ask if the person would like to make a formal complaint and refer them to this Policy and Procedure on our website.

Formal Complaints

Formal complaints will either be received by the Corporate Services Team via the Feedback Inbox or by the Executive Assistant via letter in the London Office.

Formal Complaints will be dealt with by a relevant manager. However, staff may be asked to provide information, documentation and correspondence to support an investigation into a complaint and should make every effort to do so.