

## **Carers Trust**

### **Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure**

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 customers. Our customers are members of our partnership with network partners, carers and other partners.

#### **1.1 Complimenting our service**

Compliments are valuable, welcome and important and when they are received, either verbally or 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.

#### **1.2 Complaining about our service**

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 Appendix 1.

Carers Trust is not required to investigate the following:

- a complaint by an employee relating to their employment (this should be handled through the grievance policy and procedure)
- a complaint that was made in person or by telephone and is resolved to the complainant's satisfaction no later than the next working day after the day the complaint was made
- a complaint that has already been investigated and resolved.

#### **1.3 What is a complaint?**

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

The formal complaints procedure is set out below. However, where you do have a complaint you are encouraged to try to sort out the problem informally at first. This can best be done by talking with the people directly involved. In this way it is hoped that the problem can be sorted out quickly and gives the people who gave rise to the complaint the opportunity to resolve it.

## **2. Principles of Carers Trust's complaints procedure**

- Carers Trust recognises that comments about its services are an important part of customer feedback and will be used to inform our on-going business improvements.
- Complaints will be investigated fully and fairly.
- 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.

- If you are not happy with the result of the response to the complaint, you have the right to appeal.

Carers Trust is committed to ensuring that its services are of the highest quality. The 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 both letter and email
- 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](http://www.carers.org))
  - available on request.

Complainants should be informed that they will receive (as far as is reasonably practical):

- assistance to enable them to understand the complaint procedure, and
- advice on where they may obtain such assistance.

### **3. Vexatious or malicious complaints**

Most complaints provide Carers Trust with an opportunity to improve its practice and to learn from people's experience. However Carers Trust has a responsibility to protect its staff from people who behave in a way which is abusive or malicious and to avoid inappropriate use of its resources through dealing with persistent or vexatious complaints. Carers Trust will not investigate complaints that it considers to be vexatious or malicious. Nor will it investigate anonymous 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

### **4. Who can make a complaint?**

This procedure is for members of the public who have received a service from Carers Trust. This policy is not for staff or volunteers employed by the Trust, who are referred to the internal Grievance Procedure or the Whistleblowing Policy.

We recognise that it may sometimes be difficult to distinguish between Carers Trust and individual Carers Trust Centres or Schemes. However Carers Centres and Schemes are independently registered charities and complaints about services you have received from a Carers Centre need to go directly to them. Carers Trust can only become involved in complaints about a Carers Centre or Scheme in exceptional circumstances (see Appendix 1 Section B).

Carers Trust funders and contractors need to follow the procedures for complaints or disputes laid out in contracts, grants or other funding arrangements with CarersTrust.

## **5. Accountability**

The Chief Executive of Carers Trust is responsible for the efficient operation of this complaints procedure. Responsibility for carrying out investigations of complaints may be delegated to appropriate Directors or Managers in Carers Trust, under the authority of the Chief Executive.

## **6. Recording complaints**

The PA to Chief Executive within Carers Trust will be responsible for ensuring a record of all compliments and complaints is maintained. These will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team on a quarterly 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, and
- the date the report of the outcome of the investigation was sent to the complainant.

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

## **7. Annual Complaints Report**

Carers Trust will prepare an annual complaints report for each year in which they will:

- specify the number of 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.

Carers Trust will ensure that their annual complaint report is available to anyone on request.

## Appendix 1 - Complaints Procedure

### Section A - Complaints about Carers Trust:

You can complain about any aspect of Carers Trust's work. Examples might include a concern about the quality of a particular service, decisions that have been made or information that has been provided. If your complaint is about Carers Trust then there are three stages that you can go through to try and resolve the problem. You may wish to involve an advocate, friend or someone else to support you at any stage. However, they should not be someone directly involved in the matter being investigated. If you need a sign language or community language interpreter, please let the person dealing with the complaint know and every reasonable effort will be made to provide it.

#### The three stages are:

**Stage one (Informal)** Speak to the individual(s) concerned or their line manager and try to resolve the complaint informally. The individual concerned is required to tell you their name and who their line manager is if you ask them.

**Stage two (Formally registering a complaint)** If you are not satisfied with the response you have received at stage one (informal) you should then use stage two of this procedure.

Outline the details of your complaint by letter, fax, email, or audio tape and send it to:

*Executive Assistant to Chief Executive, Carers Trust, 32-36 Loman Street, Southwark, London SE1 0EH*

*Telephone number: 0207 922 7741 Email (cwilliams@carers.org)*

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) The Board of trustees are ultimately responsible as trustees of the organisation.

Your complaint will be acknowledged by letter within seven working days from the date it is received. The letter will confirm that the matter raised will be investigated by Carers Trust and who is investigating the complaint.

You will receive a full response to your complaint within 21 working days from the start of the investigation in writing from the person appointed to investigate the complaint. The response will include the following information:

- 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, the letter will outline reasons why and give a date by which a full answer is expected from Carers Trust.

**Stage three (Appeal)** If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint then outline the reasons for your dissatisfaction by letter, fax, email, or audio tape 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).

An Appeals Panel normally of three members, including a trustee, will be convened to consider your appeal. The Chief Executive or Chair of the Board of Trustees will be responsible for ensuring the panel is appropriately representative. Panel membership will be restricted to people who have had no previous involvement in the complaint.

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.

### **Time limits**

In circumstances where time limits cannot be met due to unforeseen circumstances, complainants will be notified in writing. The reasons for the delay with adjusted timescales will be supplied by the person responsible for handling the complaint.

### **Section B - Complaints about Carers Trust Carers Centres or Scheme**

If your complaint is about a Local Carers Centre or Scheme, then as each Carers Centre and Scheme is an independently registered charity you need to contact the Carers Centre or Scheme 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 Carers Centre or Scheme's complaints procedure as outlined. If the Carers Centre or Scheme has provision for an independent review of their complaints handling process then you should agree with them a mutually acceptable independent person to review the complaints handling procedure'

In cases where Carers Trust receives a number of complaints about one Centre or Scheme 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.

### **7. Section C - Complaints about Carers Trust by a Carers Centre or Scheme**

Carers Centres or Schemes wishing to make a complaint about Carers Trust should follow the process as set out in Section A of the complaints policy, but note that Centres and Schemes as members of Carers Trust Network are bound by the Principles of Partnership.

== End ==