

1). Introduction

We are committed to providing a high-quality service to all our customers. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to improve our standards.

We aim to handle complaints quickly, effectively and in a fair and honest way. We take all complaints seriously and use valuable information from investigating to help us improve the service we provide. We treat all complaints in confidence.

If you have a complaint about Hartlepool and East Durham Mind then please tell us about it. 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.

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.

2).The three stages are:

(a)Stage one (Informal)

Often people feel more comfortable about suggesting improvements rather than complaining formally. Anyone receiving services may make a suggestion or speak to the individual(s) concerned or their line manager and try to resolve the complaint informally. If your complaint is regarding a member of staff, the individual concerned is required to tell you their name and who their line manager is if you ask them.

(b)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 the Service Manager/Lead. If your complaint is about the Service Manager/Lead then you need to address it to the CEO/Director (marked private and confidential) who is ultimately responsible as a CEO/Director of the organisation.

Your complaint will be acknowledged by letter within seven working days from the date it is received. The letter will contain the following information:

- *Name, address and telephone number of the person who will investigate the complaint*
- *The date the investigation will start*
- *What support you can receive during the process of the complaint, e.g. in terms of making information accessible, using interpreters etc.*
- *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:*
- *Details of the investigation*

- *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*

(c) 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 Service Manager (or the Chair/Director if it is about the Service Manager).

An Appeals Panel normally of three members, including a trustee, will be convened to consider your appeal, and will plan the approach to the appeal within 7 working days of being actioned. The CEO/Director 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*
- *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 action that may be taken in light of the complaint.*

3). Review of the process

If once you have been through stages one to three of the complaints procedure, you are not satisfied that Hartlepool and East Durham Mind has followed the process properly and dealt with your complaint fairly (e.g. by giving you insufficient opportunity to represent your view or ensuring all the relevant people are involved in the investigation), then you can outline the reasons for your dissatisfaction by letter, fax, email, or audio tape within 21 working days of receiving the Appeals Panel report to the Service Manager (or the Chair if it is about the Service Manager) to request a review of the complaints handling process, not a further investigation of the complaint.

The Service Manager or the CEO/Director will make arrangements for a review of the complaint-handling process and will inform you of how the review will be carried out. The decision of the process review will be final. The CEO/Director or Service Manager will communicate in writing within 28 working days of receiving your appeal:

- *whether or not the procedure has been followed properly and fairly*
- *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*
- *what action may be taken in light of the review.*

4). 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.

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We can provide this policy in other languages or in other formats on request