

**Name of Policy: FEEDBACK, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY**

**I INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Purpose: This policy explains how the Cardinal Hume Centre (“the Centre”) receives and processes feedback from clients and the public, including suggestions, compliments, concerns and complaints. In the case of complaints it also details the complainant’s right to appeal and how appeals are handled.
- 1.2 This policy contains rights for all groups marked ‘++’ in the table below. It contains responsibilities for those marked “+++”. It will be of interest to those marked ‘+’

Clients	Employees	Volunteers	Contractors	Trustees	Donors	Public	Learners on Work Experience
++	+++	+++	++/+++	+	+	++	+++

Appropriate information will be made available to each of these groups to advise them of the policy. This is outlined in Annex 2.

- 1.3 We actively invite everyone who is affected by the policy to tell us their views and help improve how it works in practice. We welcome all feedback in order to improve outcomes for clients.

**2 Scope of this policy**

- 2.1 Giving and receiving informal feedback should be a regular part of maintaining good relationships within the Centre. This policy offers routes to obtain a formal response to feedback from current and potential clients, ex-clients, visitors/guests and other members of the public (eg. neighbours).
- 2.2 The policy covers:
  - Feedback about a service received, refused or unreasonably withheld.
  - Feedback about how the Centre operates, eg. safety; buildings and equipment; policies and management; information we have recorded about a client.
  - Feedback about staff and other users of the Centre.
- 2.3 The term Feedback includes complaints or concerns, compliments, and suggestions. A ‘complaint’ is any expression of dissatisfaction with our services, whether justified or not.
- 2.4 Feedback relating to abuse and neglect should be dealt with using the Centre’s Safeguarding policies.

- 2.5 The Centre may stop investigation of a complaint if it becomes apparent that it relates to criminal activity and should be referred onto the police.
- 2.6 If a complaint relates to a Centre service funded by **Supporting People**, we will try to resolve the matter internally. However, a client may complain directly to the Westminster Young Adults Pathway team at City Hall.
- 2.8 Clients using the Centre's Immigration service can raise a concern or complaint directly to the **Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner** at any time. Where the case is Legal Aid funded a complaint can also be made to the **Legal Services Commission** who will carry out their own investigation.
- 2.9 Where a third-party service is offered at the Centre the Service Level Agreement between the provider and the Centre should specify if the provider requires their own Complaints policy to be used. In all other cases the Centre's Feedback and Complaints policy will apply.

### **3. The Policy**

- 3.1 The Cardinal Hume Centre values all feedback. We will therefore promote a culture in which everyone can give feedback openly and from which we learn as an organisation.
- 3.2 We will make it easy for clients to give feedback to the Centre, both positive and negative. This includes publicising the policy in ways that are easily accessible to clients.
- 3.3 Everyone working in the Centre, whether employee, volunteer, contractor or trustee, is empowered to hear feedback and complaints from clients and should be familiar with the policy. Training will be given where appropriate to support this approach.
- 3.4 We will investigate complaints where the events described in the complaint took place within the previous 3 months. If the complaint relates to a Safeguarding issue, then this should always be investigated and follow the Safeguarding policies as indicated above.
- 3.5 We will follow up on all feedback, including complaints, promptly and fairly. Feedback and complaints will not affect the quality of support that we give to a client.
- 3.6 All feedback from clients will be copied to X:\Managers \Feedback and Complaints, together with all related correspondence, for monitoring purposes. If appropriate, the date feedback/complaint is received should be noted in the client's In-Form file but no details included.

## **Procedures for implementing the policy**

### **4 Hearing and acknowledging feedback**

- 4.1 The Centre welcomes all feedback and offers clients and others a range of means by which to provide this. This can be orally or in writing, and can be to any staff member or via mail/email/website /suggestion box.
- 4.2 Staff will capture and deal with feedback in accordance with the guidance in annex I.I.
- 4.3 Where feedback is given orally to a staff member, that staff member should ask the giver whether s/he wants it to be recorded. If so the recipient should note the feedback. A

template feedback form is available in X:\All Centre \Feedback and Complaints. If the giver does not want the feedback recorded the recipient should note that the feedback will be passed on to the appropriate Service Manager, but there is no guarantee that any further action will be taken.

- 4.4 The person giving feedback can choose to remain anonymous when feedback is recorded.
- 4.5 All feedback should be forwarded to the relevant Service Manager on the day it is received. If the Service Manager is absent from the office e.g. on leave, or if the feedback appears to be a complaint against the Service Manager then it should be forwarded to the relevant Head of Service.
- 4.6 The Service Manager will decide what type of feedback (complaint, compliment, suggestion, etc) and how to deal with it, taking into account the guidance in sections 6 to 12 below and the Centre's wider policies.
- 4.7 The Service Manager will acknowledge the feedback to the client within 2 working days, advising them how this will be taken forward. This will usually be in writing (letter or email), although if the client has e.g. literacy/language difficulties then this may require a further meeting or telecom. A template for the acknowledgement letter is available in X:\Managers \Feedback and Complaints.
- 4.8 If the complaint is from a service user, the Service Manager will log the date of acknowledgment in InForm.

## **5 Compliments**

- 5.1 Where the feedback is a compliment the Service Manager should congratulate all the staff members/volunteers who are linked to the compliment.
- 5.2 Where the compliment relates to service provision, the manager should also consider whether there are any implications for how that service is delivered in future, or whether there are possible implications for other services i.e. shared good practice.

## **6 Suggestions and concerns**

- 6.1 The Service Manager should take whatever steps are timely and appropriate in the context of what is suggested. Opportunities to involve the person who made the suggestion in finding a solution should be considered. Where the issue is a concern, taking steps to reassure the person might be more appropriate.

## **7 Complaints - Principles**

- 7.1 Complaints are the most complex form of feedback and need to be handled carefully.

The Centre operates a three-stage process for resolving complaints internally:

- **Stage 1: Investigation by Service Manager**  
Aims to resolve most complaints at the point of service delivery.

- **Stage 2: Adjudication**  
Enables designated managers to review the outcome of stage 1 if the client is not satisfied and makes an appeal.
- **Stage 3: Appeal**  
Enables a Director to review the process followed at stages 1 and 2 if the client is still dissatisfied and appeals further.

A complainant who is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal procedure may also appeal to an external organisation (see section 2.6 and 2.7 above). If this happens, the Chief Executive will lead the Centre's response or nominate another senior manager to fulfil that role.

- 7.2 We will keep the complainant informed about the progress of our investigation of the complaint. If translation or interpretation is required, we may extend the time limit at each stage by 7 days. If the complaint is complex, we may extend the time limit subject to the consent of the complainant, and we will always confirm the new deadline.
- 7.3 We may, at any stage of our complaints procedure, review a complaint and give a decision, without a formal investigation, where a Director or the Chief Executive considers it to be deliberately repetitious or vexatious.
- 7.4 If the complainant decides not to pursue or withdraws a complaint at any point, the case will be closed and the manager will communicate the decision to everyone involved.
- 7.5 Anonymous complaints will be handled at stage 1 of the procedure, i.e. the relevant Service Manager will determine whether and what form of response is required and, where practical and appropriate, publish any response in an accessible place, e.g. at the place where the complaint was made.

## 8 Complaints: Stage 1 Investigation

This stage may take **up to 15 working days**, including the 2 working days in which the acknowledgment letter was prepared

- 8.1 Service Managers should resolve most complaints at stage 1. The manager will need to investigate, for example:
- a) Was the complainant given help to follow Centre policies? If not, s/he should be invited to do so now with any special assistance required.
  - b) If this does not resolve the issue or is not relevant, and the complainant does not want to meet to discuss the complaint, the investigating manager should:
    - Gather relevant facts from staff and/or other agencies involved.
    - Review documentary evidence such as case notes.
    - Examine the scene of any relevant incident(s).
  - c) What would be a reasonable and impartial perspective on the complaint?

- 8.2 All staff are required to cooperate with the investigating manager to gather evidence to respond to the complaint.
- 8.3 When replying to a complaint, we will confirm the final outcome in writing, stating whether the complaint was upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, any remedies we are offering (see Section 11), and how we intend to prevent a re-occurrence of the situation that led to the complaint. We will also inform the complainant of any right of further redress, e.g. progression to the next stage, or appeal to an external organisation.
- 8.4 One copy of the response should be placed in the X:\Managers\Feedback and Complaints file, and a second copy should be sent to the Director of Services.
- 8.5 If a client is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation at stage 1 s/he may appeal this. When appealing against a previous decision, we will ask the complainant to state their dissatisfaction with how we handled the matter. We will also ask them to tell us what they consider to be the nature of service failure.

## **9 Complaints: Stage 2 Adjudication**

This stage may take **up to 10 working days**

- 9.1 Where the complainant has complained about the **outcome** of stage 1, and wants to progress to Stage 2, the feedback should be received in the same way as described in Section 4 above and response date logged on InForm.
- 9.2 The person receiving the feedback should also refer it to the relevant Head of Service depending on which service the complaint relates to. The Head will appoint a Service Manager, who was not involved in the Stage 1 investigation, to undertake the stage 2 review.
- The purpose of stage 2 is to ensure, as far as is practical, that the outcome of stage 1 was appropriate.
- 9.3 The adjudicating Service Manager will review only the evidence gathered in stage 1, and then determine whether s/he agrees on the fairness and reasonableness of the outcome. The investigation conducted at stage 1 is **not** to be re-opened. If someone presents additional evidence while the adjudicating manager is reviewing the record of stage 1, the relevant Head of Service should be consulted on whether stage 1 should start again for all or part of the complaint. In making a decision, the Head of Service will consider the interests of all involved in the case, and the circumstances in which the additional evidence became available.
- 9.4 The written response should be consistent with the process at 8.3. One copy of the response should be placed in the X:\Managers\ Feedback and Complaints,

## **10 Complaints: Stage 3 Appeal**

This stage may take **up to 20 working days**.

- 10.1 Where the complainant has complained about the **process** through which the complaint was handled at stages 1 or 2, and wants to progress to stage 3, the feedback should be received in the same way as described at 4.1 above and then logged in InForm.
- 10.2 The person receiving the feedback should refer it to the Chief Executive (or another non-operational Director in the Chief Executive's absence). The Chief Executive will appoint a Director, who was not involved in the Stage 2 review, to respond to the stage 3 Appeal.
- 10.3 The purpose of stage 3 is to ensure, as far as is practical, that the process followed in stage 1 and/or stage 2 was in accordance with our policy. The case itself is not re-opened.
- 10.4 The Director may invite to a meeting the complainant and his/her representative(s), and/or the managers involved in earlier stages of the procedure, to review the process followed.
- 10.5 The written response should be consistent with the process at 9.3. The complainant should be advised of their right to contact the Ombudsman and/or seek legal remedies if they are still dissatisfied. Where the complainant lives or has lived in the supported accommodation the response should also advise the client of the right to take the matter to the Westminster Young Adults Pathway team Immigration clients can escalate complaints to the OISC, or to the Legal Services Commission if it is a Legal Aid funded case.
- 10.6 One copy of the response should be placed in the X:\Managers\ Feedback and Complaints file; a second copy should be sent to the Director of Services, and a third copy should be sent to the Chief Executive.

## **11 Remedies**

- 11.1 When responding to a complaint, we will explain how we intend to remedy the situation. Remedies include:
  - An apology.
  - A review of practice, either in general or by the worker concerned.
  - Making amendments or corrections to any records we hold.
  - A letter of correction, clarification or explanation to anyone affected by the issues that gave rise to the complaint.
  - Repairing damage.
  - Considering any practical action suggested by the complainant.
  - Compensating a client in kind, for example if clients' goods are damaged through no fault of their own – such as loss of refrigerated food if a fridge/freezer is faulty, or clothes damaged by flooding. The Senior Management Team would evaluate the appropriateness of compensation on a case-by-case basis.

## **12 Appeals**

This section relates to residents in the Centre's supported accommodation and BHH flats.

- 12.1 If you feel that the Centre, or a member of the Centre's staff has made a decision unfairly that affects you then you can appeal that decision.

- NB The original decision will remain in place unless and until it is overturned in response to the appeal.
- 12.2 You need to put your appeal in writing stating the decision you are appealing and the reason that you are appealing it. A form is available for this but you do not have to use the form. A member of staff can also help you to write your appeal. Your appeal must be received within seven days of the date on the notice advising you of the decision that you are appealing. Appeals should be addressed to the Team Leader in the hostel.
- 12.3 You will receive written acknowledgement that your appeal has been received from the Team Leader within two days. This will also tell you how soon you can expect a decision on your appeal. We will do this as quickly as possible, and usually within three days, but if an investigation is required it may take longer.
- 12.4 You will receive written notice of the outcome of your appeal within the timescale given. The reasons for the decision will also be given. You will also be offered the opportunity to meet the person who dealt with the appeal so that s/he can explain their reasons.
- 12.5 If you are unhappy with the outcome of the original appeal you can make a second appeal to the Manager of Supported Accommodation. This should be made in writing within seven days of the date of the original decision. This should state the reasons that you are unhappy with the original appeal decision including any additional information that you feel should be considered.
- 12.6 The Manager of Supported Accommodation will write to you acknowledging your appeal within two days of receiving it. This will also tell you how soon you can expect a decision on your appeal. We will always try and do this as quickly as possible.
- 12.7 The second appeal will focus on whether an appropriate process was followed to deal with the initial appeal, and whether the outcome arrived at as a result of that process was appropriate. A second appeal will only involve a new investigation if either a) the initial investigation was felt to be inappropriate, or b) additional information is brought to light that was not available at the time of the initial appeal.

## **12 Monitoring the Policy**

- 12.1 The Director of Services will carry out a quarterly audit of Feedback received to ensure that issues are being dealt with appropriately and to identify any emerging trends.
- 12.2 A brief report summarising the findings of this audit will be written and circulated to the SMT. The SMT will discuss any significant issues arising and decide on changes required to existing policy or practice as a consequence. Any actions agreed will be appended to the report which will then be placed in the X:All Centre\Feedback and Complaints file.

**Date Policy Adopted: June 2009**

**Previous review dates: May 2015**

**Date Policy Last Reviewed: August 2020**

**Dates of Next Review: August 2021**

## **Annex I: Summary of the policy and related procedures**

The term Feedback includes complaints or concerns, compliments, and suggestions. A 'complaint' is any expression of dissatisfaction with our services, whether justified or not.

- 2.1 Feedback from clients or members of the public can be received in a variety of forms - orally or in writing, and can be to any staff member or via mail/email/website /suggestion box. The person giving feedback can choose to remain anonymous but if this is the case then step 2.5 below will not apply.
- 2.2 Where feedback is given orally to a staff member, that staff member should ask the giver whether s/he wants it to be recorded. If so the recipient should note the feedback. If the giver does not want the feedback recorded the recipient should note that the feedback will be passed on to the appropriate Service Manager, but there is no guarantee that any further action will be taken.
- 2.3 All feedback should be forwarded to the relevant Service Manager on the day it is received. If the Service Manager is absent from the office e.g. on leave, or if the feedback appears to be a complaint against the Service Manager then it should be forwarded to the relevant Head of Service.
- 2.4 The Service Manager will decide what type of feedback (complaint, compliment, suggestion, etc).
- 2.5 The Service Manager acknowledges the feedback to the client within 2 working days, advising them how this will be taken forward. This will usually be in writing (letter or email), although if the client has e.g. literacy/language difficulties then this may require a further meeting or phone call and use of an interpreter.
- 2.6 The Service Manager takes overall responsibility for dealing with the issue in line with the Centre's wider policies. In the case of a complaint this will involve a full investigation.
- 2.7 The Service Manager should arrange for appropriate feedback to be given to the client who gave the feedback, and to other clients that may be affected.
- 2.8 The Service Manager should update the Inform Feedback log once the issue is completed
- 2.9 In the case of a complaint the complainant may appeal if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, or the process followed.
- 2.10 The Director of Services will carry out a quarterly review of the Feedback log to identify any emerging trends, and to ensure that issues are being dealt with appropriately. A brief report will be written and circulated to the Senior Management Team (SMT). Once agreed by the SMT the report will be placed in the X:All Centre\Feedback file.

**Please note that Annex I is a summary of the policy and related procedures, and you should refer to the full policy before implementing any action under the policy.**

## **Annex 2 Communication plan - Feedback and Complaints Policy**

To be reviewed annually

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Approach</b>
Clients	Rights	<p>Notices as appropriate to client group in key locations including Hub, Digital Inclusion room, ESOL, Family Service Space, Supported Accommodation</p> <p>Suggestion boxes/complaints leaflets in selected locations</p> <p>Supported Accommodation residents given briefing on move-in, and additional information in Welcome Pack</p> <p>clients given written advice on the complaint handling process in the client care letter.</p> <p>Notices in Spanish in Gateway and ESOL – consider other languages in response to changing client groups</p>
Employees	Resp.	<p>Copy of policy sent to all employees with annex 1: summary as a cover note.</p> <p>Training session for new staff and then annually reviewed within Service Teams.</p>
Volunteers	Resp.	<p>Copy of Summary and briefing as part of initial service induction.</p> <p>Option to attend training where line manager feels this is appropriate.</p>
Contractors	Rights Resp.	<p>Service providers working on site – given overview of CHC policy as part of their induction. Where organisations have their own Complaints policy the SLA should detail the approach to be used in the event of a complaint against the service provider.</p> <p>Other contractors should be made aware of the Centre’s policy if an issue arises.</p>
Trustees	Info.	<p>Copy of policy on request. Copy of Quarterly report to SDC – for information unless it raises issues of particular concern.</p>
Donors	Info	<p>Copy of policy on request.</p>
Public	Rights	<p>Copy of policy on request or if an issue arises e.g. neighbours complain about noise nuisance.</p>
Work experience	Resp.	<p>Briefing and copy of Summary as part of initial service induction.</p> <p>Option to attend training where line manager feels this is appropriate.</p>