

0120 Complaints Policy

Introduction

This policy is designed to provide a positive response to complaints and comments, and ensure that Dementia Forward is open about the improvements that we have made as a result of feedback.

The Chief Executive will monitor the implementation of this policy, collect information about required improvements, and will report all complaints and outcomes to the Board of Trustees on a monthly basis.

Many complaints arise from misunderstandings. It is very important to ensure that every effort is made to ensure that users and carers understand the reasons for decisions made about care, treatment and service delivery. The need for complaints can often be avoided if there is good, ongoing communication between staff, volunteers, users and carers.

Dementia Forward is committed to providing a quality service and achieving the highest standards. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our service users, members of the public or others who may want to comment. Therefore, we aim to ensure that:

1. Making a complaint is as easy and transparent as possible.
2. We deal with complaints appropriately and within the agreed time frame.
3. We treat a complaint as any clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service, or organisation as a whole, which calls for a response.
4. We respond in the right way – for example, with an explanation or an apology where we have got things wrong and if relevant and appropriate information on any action taken.
5. We have the right to refuse to accept a complaint where the complaint is clearly vexatious, malicious or motivated by racist, sexist, homophobic or other discriminatory attitudes, or where the complaint threatens or abuses Dementia Forward's staff/volunteers. The decision as to whether a complaint is vexatious will be taken by the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Board of Trustees where necessary. Dementia Forward defines a vexatious complainant as someone who persists in making a complaint or demand when all reasonable attempts to resolve their concerns have been made.
6. When a complaint identifies that something has gone wrong or has fallen below standards it is seen as an opportunity to improve and avoid a recurrence and it can allow for systems, policies, practices or procedures to be amended or put in place as appropriate.

The procedure covers complaints about the services that the organisation provides to the public, and complaints about the staff and volunteers involved in delivering those services.

Complaints regarding discrimination and victimisation will also be investigated under this complaints procedure.

Assistance, where possible, will be offered to all parties in a complaint procedure to ensure equality of representation. Further guidance is available from the Charity Commission.

All complaints will be kept confidential to the parties concerned unless a concern is raised in relation to a safeguarding matter or in relation to serious criminality in which case we reserve the right to escalate the matter to relevant authorities. However, the complaint will normally be made known to the Chief Executive who will discuss the matter with the Dementia Forward Board of Trustees where necessary.

Complaints Procedure

How do you make a complaint?

Wherever possible we will try to respond and resolve the situation at an informal level. The matter will go no further unless the injured party is still dissatisfied, at which point the formal process will then begin.

Formal complaints should be made to the Chief Executive Officer in writing:

The Chief Executive Officer
Dementia Forward, Community House, Allhallowgate, Ripon, HG4 1LE

In instances involving the CEO, formal complaints should be made in writing to:

Chair, Board of Trustees
Dementia Forward, Community House, Allhallowgate, Ripon, HG4 1LE

Complaints regarding individuals, or where a formal follow-up is required, must:

- be in writing or via an advocacy service
- be from an identified complainant
- include the complainant's name and contact details

We acknowledge that in certain instances a complainant may wish to remain anonymous. In such incidences we will review the nature of the complaint and decide on follow up action if deemed necessary.

What happens next?

We aim, where possible, to address complaints promptly.

All complaints received will be logged onto Dementia Forward's complaints register.

We will acknowledge all complaints in writing within 7 working days from when the complaint is received and will review the complaint to consider whether further investigations need to be carried out and will determine who is appropriate to lead on the complaint.

When investigating complaints Dementia Forward will ensure that:

The complaint is fully understood – this may require meeting with or talking to the complainant.

There is an understanding of the response of staff or the situation in which the problem arose. This may involve interviewing or speaking to staff and volunteers, or reviewing any written information. When interviewing complainants, staff or volunteers, they should be offered the opportunity to bring someone with them.

As a result of the investigation actions may include:

- Specific improvements to service
- Bringing together parties to mediate the dispute
- Recommendations on staff training

The timescales for responding will be as follows:

In most cases we aim to provide a full response within five working days. However, if this is not possible because, for example, a detailed investigation is required, we will provide an interim reply explaining what is being done to deal with the complaint and providing a revised timetable.

A full response will be then sent in writing within ten working days. In some cases, the complainant may have expressed a preference for a telephone discussion regarding the outcome. However, this will always be followed up by a written response so that both parties have a written record of the outcome.

Actions identified as a result of a complaint should be implemented within a reasonable timetable.

Managers will produce an implementation plan for any improvements identified.

Appeals Procedure

The following appeals procedure will apply in cases where the complainant is not satisfied with the initial response:

In cases where the complainant is dissatisfied with the response they have received they are entitled to appeal the decision within seven days of receiving the response to:

Chair, Board of Trustees
Dementia Forward, Community House, Allhallowgate, Ripon, HG4 1LE

Appeals will be responded to within 14 working days in writing.

All logged complaints on Dementia Forward's register will be included in the Board reports and reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Time limits on making a complaint

Normally complaints should be made within three months of the event or within three months of the complainant becoming aware of cause to complain, subject to an overall limit of six months from the event. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the Board of Trustees, taking into account reasons for the delay and the practicability of investigating the matter.

This policy has been approved & authorised by:

Name: Chris Lees

Position: Trustee

Date: 16th December 2019

Signature: