



# **Client Service & Complaints Policy & Procedures**

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## Introduction

This policy is intended for the use of non-employees of WAVE as a means of making their views known about the standard of service, treatment and care received. Alternatively, it can be used to register concerns about refusal of services. Due to the importance WAVE places on addressing negative comments by clients, their relatives/carers and/advocates or others, this Policy will focus on the procedure for addressing such issues.

The Policy demonstrates WAVE's commitment to providing high quality services to its clients and in most instances, we have succeeded in this. However, we acknowledge that there are times when things can go wrong. When this happens, we believe that receiving and acting on the views of those individuals who provide or use our services, their relatives/carers and/or advocates, is vital to our success and helps WAVE to maintain and improve services.

WAVE management and staff understand that accepting compliments and sensitively handling complaints contributes to our overall commitment to seek and use feedback to ensure we are doing what is needed by our clients and to motivate our staff to continue to improve the services they offer.

## Aim of the Policy

The aim of the Policy is to: -

- **Empower** clients/others by instilling confidence in them and giving them more influence over WAVE and the way it operates. It also enables WAVE to show that it is focusing on needs.
- **Help** to promote WAVE to the public by showing it is responsible and accountable. It enables WAVE to demonstrate that it has an open, fair and honest approach
- **Save** WAVE time and effort by enabling problems and concerns to be tackled early. It can minimise the adverse effects of things that go wrong and reduce the chances of problems escalating
- **Benefit** WAVE's development by helping the organisation measure the quality of our services and gives management and staff an opportunity to monitor and improve them. It also helps WAVE be more responsive to unmet needs
- **Enhance** WAVE's reputation by helping communication, showing a caring approach, helping to foster a good reputation with clients and confirming WAVE's commitment to excellence.

## **Definition of a Complaint**

For the purposes of this Policy a complaint is defined as "any expression of dissatisfaction requiring a response".

However, WAVE also understands that a complaint may be made without an overt statement that it is a complaint and WAVE recognises and acknowledges any expression of dissatisfaction as a potential complaint.

## **WAVE's Complaint Charter**

### **Anyone wishing to make a comment or complaint will be: -**

- Received in a courteous and caring manner by trained and competent staff
- Assured of privacy and confidentiality in the handling of their complaint unless to do so would put at risk other clients/staff or prevent the commitment of a crime
- Listened to and their wishes respected as far as possible
- Assured that response time will be kept to an agreed minimum
- Provided with information which is clearly presented, comprehensive and timely
- Encouraged to comment positively or constructively about the service they have received
- Guaranteed that we will strive to continually monitor and enhance the service

## **Underpinning Principles**

1. All complaints should be welcomed and dealt with in a speedy, efficient and sensitive manner and always in confidence.
2. Every attempt should be made to resolve the difficulty on the spot.
3. WAVE will offer mediation opportunities at each stage within the complaints process. When mediation or a restorative approach is agreed, the complaints process will be put on hold and will only resume in the event that the mediation or restorative process does not resolve matters.
4. Complainants should be given all necessary information on how to proceed to further steps if they are not satisfied.
5. The procedures should be implemented to facilitate efficient resolution without unnecessary bureaucracy.
6. The procedures must be accessible to those who wish/need to use them.
7. Management & staff should welcome the opportunity to meet with complainants where appropriate to discuss the issues they have raised as a valuable way of positively resolving complaints.

8. The timescales within the Policy for formal complaints will be strictly adhered to i.e., **all formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days with a full written response made available within 20 working days. If this is not possible a revised timescale will be discussed and agreed with the complainant.**
9. Both verbal and written responses to complainants will avoid jargon and complicated professional terms.
10. Copies of the notes of any meetings involving WAVE and complainants will be made available to those involved.

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

### **Senior Management Team (including Chief Executive)**

The Senior Management Team is ultimately accountable for the management and administration of this Policy and it is their responsibility to ensure that,

- WAVE has a Policy and procedures in place which enable anyone wishing to provide positive or negative feedback to do so safely.
- All formal complaints are dealt with appropriately within the boundaries identified within the Policy
- Systems exist to record and monitor the nature of complaints received and actions taken
- The coordination of complaints handling is delegated to an appropriate person/s
- Appropriate support exists for staff who are the subject of complaints.
- Any necessary action identified as part of the complaint resolution procedure is put in place and improvement monitored
- Staff are made aware of and understand their responsibilities under the Policy and trained in its operation.

### **Project Managers / Senior Management**

It is the responsibility of Senior Manager to ensure that,

- The Client Service & Complaints Policy and procedures is implemented in their area of work
- All Project Managers are aware and understand their responsibilities under the policy and are trained in the operation of the policy and procedures
- They participate and cooperate as necessary in the investigation and handling of complaints received
- They inform staff of any compliments or complaints received
- Project Managers keep necessary records of complaints and compliments received and send this information to the Human Resources Team regularly
- Support systems are in place for staff who are the subject of complaints
- Any recommendations for action as a result of a complaint investigation are implemented as necessary and appropriate

Project Managers are also responsible for ensuring that,

- All complaints received are recorded and managed and resolved as close to the point of satisfaction as possible.
- All staff receive information about their responsibility to hear and deal with complaints in keeping with the policy at induction.
- All staff receive appropriate training in the handling of complaints received.
- They participate and cooperate as necessary in the investigation and handling of complaints received.
- They implement all recommendations made as a result of complaints investigations.

### **All Staff**

It is important that all staff,

- Are fully aware and understand their responsibility for recognising potential complaints as the first point of contact.
- Undertake necessary training in the handling of complaints.
- Are welcoming of complaints as part of WAVE's total approach to client care.
- Use complaints and comments as a valuable monitor of the quality of their service.
- Keep records in the organisational format to allow for the monitoring.
- Are prepared to learn from the outcome of the complaints procedure to enable their service to become more user sensitive and avoid the occurrence of further complaints.

### **The Complainant**

The following areas are not binding with regard to the complainant. They should instead, be used as guidance for WAVE to communicate to people wishing to complain. In order to ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner we would ask for complainants to cooperate by-

- working alongside WAVE in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- expressing the complaint in full as early as possible.
- responding promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.
- asking for assistance as needed.
- treating all those involved in the complaint with respect.

### **Support for Staff**

Staff often feel vulnerable when they are involved in assisting with the resolution of a complaint, particularly if they are the subject of a complaint. Support throughout the complaints process is available from the following areas: -

#### **1. Managers**

Staff should be supported throughout the complaints process by their line manager. If they feel they are not receiving the support they need, and this may not always be possible if their manager is involved in carrying out an investigation involving them, they may seek help and support from an alternative line manager.

## **2. Human Resources**

Support can be sought from a member of the HR team who can advise on the complaint process and provide independent support.

## **3. Grievance Procedure**

If a staff member feels aggrieved because they feel they are being or have been treated unfairly during a complaint investigation or as the result of recommendations made they may invoke the grievance procedure.

**N.B. Unless disciplinary procedures are instigated no record of staff involvement in a complaint will be kept in their personal files.**

## **Protocols for Action**

The following protocols outline the action to be taken by staff in responding to complaints

There are two stages within the Client Service & Complaints Procedure

**Stage 1      Local Resolution**  
**Stage 2      Organisational Review**

Local Resolution refers to action taken at Project level. The aim of local resolution is to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant as close to the point of contact as possible whilst being fair to staff. We offer mediation at all stages. There are two levels of local resolution as follows: -

### **Level 1 – Verbal Complaints**

The person receiving the verbal complaint should deal with it on the spot whenever possible. Any action taken to resolve a verbal complaint should be completed within 5 working days and recorded (line management should be informed of the action taken). Where a complainant requests a written response to a verbal complaint this should be given within 5 working days by a Senior Manager.

### **Dealing with Verbal Complaints**

- Where a client complains make sure any treatment or care which is needed immediately is given or existing services maintained.
- Listen to the complainant and seek to understand the nature of the complaint and any issues that are not immediately obvious.
- Try to resolve the complaint sensitively on the spot.
- Inform the complainant of the options they have to resolve the complaint.
- Discuss the complaint and action taken or proposed with the line manager.
- Record details of the situation on a Complaint Record Form (see appendix 1) and if the complaint is successfully resolved at this point send a copy to WAVE's Human Resources Department to be added to the statistical report for senior management team.
- If unable to resolve the complaint on the spot or the issues are serious enough to warrant further formal investigation, Senior Management immediately move to

level 2 of local resolution.

## **Level 2 – Written or Unresolved Verbal Complaints**

A written complaint received by staff, or an unresolved verbal complaint must be notified to line management to be dealt with through the **Formal Complaints Procedure**.

### **Criteria for referral to Level 2 – Formal Complaints Procedure**

- Where the complainant requests that their verbal complaint is taken further, or their complaint is in writing.
- Where the complaint concerns more than one service.
- Where serious matters are concerned i.e., where staff failure may result in disciplinary action.
- Where there is a potential or actual health & safety issue.
- Where the complainant infers or states that legal action may follow.
- Where a question of eligibility for services is identified.

The complaint should be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt by a Senior Manager and the complaint together with a copy of the letter of acknowledgement should then be forwarded to Human Resources/Director of Operations who will be responsible for determining who should be involved in any investigation. The person(s) investigating must liaise with WAVE's Human Resources Department/Director of Operations to ensure consistent application of the policy across the organisation and to access advice/assistance with managing and responding to the complaint normally within the 20-working day timescale. If this is not possible the complainant will be informed of the revised timescale.

If after full investigation and response the complainant remains dissatisfied, the matter will be referred to **Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, i.e. Organisational Review**

### **Stage 2 Organisational Review**

Organisational Review refers to the action taken by WAVE when a complaint remains unresolved to the satisfaction of the complainant after local resolution protocols have been exhausted. The aim of Organisational Review is to provide the complainant with an avenue to appeal the local decision and to have the case reviewed by a panel of more senior managers who have had no previous involvement in the case.

When local resolution has failed to resolve the complaint, the file together with all relevant information should be passed to WAVE's Human Resources Department/Director of Operations who will write to the complainant within 5 working days of receiving the file to inform them of the process to be followed.

The Human Resources Department/Director of Operations will identify a person(s) considered appropriate, to review the case on behalf of the complainant. This review may require further meetings with the complainant and any others who can assist with providing relevant information. It is the responsibility of the Panel to keep the complainant informed of the progress of their review, particularly if it takes the full 20



working days to complete.

On completion of their review the Panel will write to the complainant within 20 working days to inform them of WAVE's decision relating to their complaint. If this is not possible a revised timescale will be provided to the complainant. All information relating to the complaint investigation and/or review must be forwarded to WAVE's designated complaints coordinator to be held confidentially and to allow for the recording of statistical information for monitoring purposes.

This is the final stage in WAVE's complaints procedure.

### **Vexatious Complaints**

Despite WAVE's best efforts some complaints cannot be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

### **Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints should always be recorded and referred to WAVE's Human Resources Department in the same way as other complaints. Anonymous complaints fall outside of the scope of any statutory procedure, and it is for WAVE to decide what action it should take. The fact that the complaint is from an anonymous source should not in itself justify a decision not to pursue the matter. Nor should it rule out referral to other procedures as relevant.

## **Outcomes**

### **For Complainant**

- Complaint resolved through local resolution level 1, end of process
- Complainant does not accept local resolution level 1, process moves to level 2 formal complaint process
- Complaint resolved at Stage One, end of process.
- Complaint remains unresolved, the process moves to organisational review.
- Complaint resolved after organisational review, end of process
- Complaint unresolved after organisational review, end of internal process. If complainant wishes to pursue complaint, they must seek relevant external agency

### **For Managers and Staff**

- The manager will discuss the principles and learning gained as a result of investigating the complaint with staff.
- Whilst the confidentiality of both the complainant and staff involved should be respected it is vital that staff can, where possible and necessary, be involved in identifying solutions and improvements and to ensure that any action required is implemented and monitored.
- It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that any recommendations arising from the complaint are implemented in full within the project.

*Appendix 1*

**Complaint Record Form**

<b>Date Complaint Received:</b>	
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**Staff Details**

Name: Job Title: Location:	
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**Complainants Details**

Name:	
Address:	
Phone Number:	

**Nature of Complaint**

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**Actions Taken**

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