

Complaints Policy

Signed By

Chair

Review: March 2018
Next Review: March 2021
Managed by: FGP Committee

Complaints Policy

Introduction

The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) believes in good customer service and we strive for excellence however, we accept that occasionally things can go wrong. If you are unhappy with any element of the service that you receive we would like you to complain to us. We can try to put things right, sometimes we can only explain ourselves but we do want to learn from the feedback we receive and use it to make improvements to our services.

The DRC welcomes comments, compliments and complaints as an important element in our drive for continuous improvement.

As a charity we are committed to recognising individual achievements, whether that is from a member of staff or a volunteer; we therefore encourage positive feedback and undertake to ensure recognition for individuals or groups where there is an indication that we have delivered excellent service to our customers.

Compliments and comments

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction with the standard of service or action by DRC and our staff affecting an individual customer or group of customers. Any verbal or written compliments will be recorded on the Compliments Register and passed to the appropriate manager. If the compliment relates to a member of staff, they will be notified immediately. Compliments and success stories will be shared with staff via the DRC intranet. Customer comments / suggestions and our actions will be shared at staff meetings. Alternatively you can send your comments to: info@drcbeds.org.uk

Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with the standard of service, action or lack of action by DRC or our staff affecting an individual customer or group of customers. Complaints may be made by any person, or someone acting on behalf of a person receiving or wishing to receive a service.

Aims

This policy aims to let all our customers know how to make a complaint or give compliments on any of our services and how their comments will be handled.

We will continue to improve our service by listening and responding to what our customers tell us, in particular by responding positively to queries and complaints.

Scope

This policy does **not** cover safeguarding complaints. Please refer to the safeguarding section below and our dedicated Safeguarding policy for details on how to notify us of a safeguarding issue.

Staff members who wish to make a complaint are **not** covered by this policy. Staff must follow the DRC Grievance Policy and Procedure available in the staff handbook.

Commitment

We are committed to providing a high quality, accessible and responsive service to all of our users. We will work in an open and accountable way that aims to build the trust and respect of everyone associated with us.

We will make information available to demonstrate that we have responded and acted upon the feedback from our customers.

The DRC is committed to ensuring that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we respond to any complaint promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- we respond in the right way - for example, address concerns, provide explanations and where things have gone wrong, action is taken;
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review our complaints policy and procedures every 3 years;
- all complaints are resolved within 10 working days and where this is not possible the complainant is notified and given reasons.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly. Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly;
- keep matters in perspective
- enable mediation between the complainant and the individual or service to whom the complaint has been referred.

Complaints Procedure

The DRC will:

- Inform our customers of their right to complain or comment and make details of the formal complaint process available to them by ensuring that information is displayed at each of our offices, through the use of posters and on our website
- Make it as simple as possible for customers to make their concerns heard by providing a choice of methods:
 - 1) By email to complaints@drcbeds.org.uk

- 2) Completing the complaints form and posting or handing in to reception
- 3) By telephone, a member of staff will complete the form for you and send you a copy in the post or by email.

- Acknowledge formal written complaints in writing
- respond within 10 working days – we hope to resolve the complaint within this time but if this is not possible we will explain why and give you a date by which you can expect a full reply
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint
- ensure that complaints are dealt with by an appropriate person. For example, if the complaint is about a member of staff, then it will be dealt with by that persons line manager
- take remedial action where appropriate
- keep records of all complaints and associated correspondence in line with Data Protection guidelines.

A complainant's responsibility is to:

- raise concerns promptly and directly with a member of DRC staff.
- bring any formal complaint to DRC attention as soon as possible
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date
- give their contact details in order to receive a response to the complaint or query
- allow us a reasonable time to deal with the matter
- inform us of any advocacy, communication, interpretation and translation needs.

There are three stages to our complaints process:

Stage One - Informal

DRC aims to settle the majority of complaints informally in the department providing the service. The complaint may be resolved quickly by way of an apology, by providing the service required or by providing an acceptable explanation to the person making the complaint.

Anyone wishing to make an informal complaint should contact the Service Manager of the department from which the service is provided, or address to the Chief Executive either verbally or by email.

We would aim to resolve the complaint and provide a written response in this time. If this is not possible, the complainant will be notified within ten working days with an expected resolution date.

Details of the complaint will be sent immediately to the Business Manager who will log the details on our complaints register.

Stage Two - Formal

If an informal complaint has not reached a satisfactory conclusion in stage one, then a formal complaint should be made in writing (assistance can be given upon request, to customers who need help completing a form) to the Business Manager whose name can be requested from reception or found on our website.

Business Manager
Poynters House
Poynters Road
Dunstable
LU5 4TP

Formal complaints will be dealt with by the Business Manager; if the complaint is about a member of staff then their line manager will be notified.

The outcome of any formal complaint will be communicated in writing to all relevant parties by the person investigating, within ten working days. Details of any remedial action taken such as staff development and training, review of any of our policies or appropriate improvements to our service would be included at this point. Occasionally, in complicated cases, investigations may take longer, if this is the case, the complainant will be notified within ten working days and will be given expected timescales if possible. This can be subjective depending on the nature of the complaint but the complainant will be kept up to date at all times.

Stage Three – Review

Complaints reaching stage three will be escalated to the Chief Executive. No one involved in stage two would be involved in stage three.

In very rare circumstances where the complainant is not happy with the solution, the Chief Executive Officer may become involved for further review of the investigation and DRC response.

All stages of the complaint will be tracked by central Administration until a resolution is agreed by all relevant parties.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

We gather and hold all information in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and the General Data Protection Regulations.

Monitoring and Reporting

All complaints and compliments are documented by our Business Manager and a month end report is compiled and passed on to the appropriate Manager and discussed at Team Meetings and board of Trustees for ongoing review and monitoring. Details of compliments and complaints will then be cascaded to the appropriate manager for action and discussion at team meetings.

All formal complaints are subject to monitoring and customers will be requested to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring form. This form is not mandatory and will not affect a customer's rights if they choose not to complete it. The purpose of monitoring is to meet our legal obligations and analyse any trends that require additional investigation or where we need to look at particular actions to bring about improvements.

Anonymous compliments and complaints

Anonymous compliments and complaints will be recorded in the usual manner, however, action may be limited if further details are required to perform a full and fair investigation.

Equality and Diversity

At DRC we do not tolerate any discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation of our staff or customers. This policy will deal with all customer complaints that relate to discrimination from a customer about other customers, our employees, or access or equity of service delivery. We have a legal, ethical and moral commitment to promote equality of opportunity in respect of all our activities. Diversity and inclusion are golden threads that underpin our company values. Our equality commitments are outline below:

- We are committed to fairness for all in terms of our service delivery and do not discriminate on any grounds including gender, transgender, pregnancy, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, offending status and class.
- Our employees and customers are entitled to a working environment which is free of discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- We ensure that our offices and buildings are accessible for customers.
- Our approach to the customer experience should ensure that our services are inclusive, accessible and free of discrimination.
- We will ensure that our Complaints and Compliments Policy and procedure is accessible to its diverse customer groups and will take into account the different communication needs of people wishing to make a complaint or leave a comment.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the promotion of well-being of children and vulnerable adults and the prevention, detection and referral of abuse or harm.

At DRC we recognise that anyone can become vulnerable at some stage in their life and are mindful of actual or potential vulnerability associated with our customers' needs.

We have taken measures to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all our customers is continuously at the heart of all the services we deliver. This includes having a rigorous vetting process in the recruitment and selection of staff, clear codes of conduct for staff and customers, thorough training and clear procedures to address any relevant concerns. We also have a safeguarding policy which outlines our procedures in dealing with any issues relating to safeguarding.

Any complaints about the treatment of, or concerns over the health, safety or welfare of a child or vulnerable adult (colleague or customer) should be raised immediately via the Personalisation Manager.

Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years or more often should business needs dictate by the Board of Trustees.

March 2018