

Complaints Policy & Procedure

1. Complaints Policy

This policy is designed to provide a positive response to complaints and comments, and ensure that Anxiety UK 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 quarterly basis. All staff and volunteers have access to training so that they are able to effect changes as necessary.

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.

Anxiety UK 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. That 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 Anxiety UK staff/volunteers. The decision as to whether a complaint is vexatious will be taken by Chief Executive in conjunction with the Board of Trustees where necessary.
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.

Information about how to make a complaint will be made readily available. Assistance, where possible, will be offered to all parties in a complaint procedure to ensure equality of representation.

All complaints should be dealt with in accordance with this policy, and the procedure outlined below. In the first instance complaints should always be raised with the Services Manager. Complaints will only be escalated to the CEO and/or Board of Trustees where the Services Manager has been unable to resolve the complaint, or in cases where the issues raised are of a serious or sensitive nature and the Services Manager feels it is necessary to bring matters to the CEO's attention.

2. Complaints Procedure

2.1 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 Services Co-ordinator

- by telephone on 0161 226 7727
- via e-mail: services@anxietyuk.org.uk
- or through the post to:

Services Co-ordinator
Anxiety UK
Nunes House
447 Chester Road
Manchester M16 9HA

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

- be in writing
- 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.

2.2 What happens next?

We aim where possible to address complaints promptly.

- All complaints received will be given an ID number and logged onto the Anxiety UK Complaints Register.
- We will acknowledge all complaints in writing within 7 working days from when the complaint is received.
- The Services Co-ordinator will review the complaint to consider whether further investigations need to be carried out.

When investigating complaints the Services Co-ordinator will ensure that:

- They fully understand the complaint – this may require them to meet with or talk to the complainant
- They understand 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 7 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 14 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 should produce an implementation plan for any improvements identified.

2.3 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 day of receiving the response to:

Chief Executive at the address above
or by email – info@anxietyuk.org.uk

- In cases where the Chief Executive is the subject of the complaint the appeal will be referred to a member of the Anxiety UK Board of Trustees.
- Appeals will be responded to within 14 working days in writing.
- In all incidences complaints will be recorded in Anxiety UK's internal complaints register. These will then be included in the board reports and reviewed on a quarterly basis.

3. Time limits on making a complaint

Normally complaints should be made within six months of the event or within six months of the complainant becoming aware of cause to complain, subject to an overall limit of 12 months from the event. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the Services Manager in discussion with the Chief Executive, and taking into account reasons for the delay and the practicability of investigating the matter.

4. Confidentiality and data retention

All complaints will be kept confidential to the parties concerned.

However, where the issues raised are of a particularly serious nature, the details of the complaint will normally be made known to the CEO who will discuss the matter with the Board of Trustees where necessary.

Complaints recorded in Anxiety UK's internal complaints register, including any evidence gathered during an investigation, will be retained for 7 years.

5. Complaints regarding external service providers

Complaints regarding external service providers will be referred to their own complaints procedure. Where appropriate, complainants will be informed of the complaints procedures of other professional bodies.

6. Monitoring Systems

A quarterly report on all complaints received, along with the outcomes, will be submitted to the Board of Trustees by the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive will review all complaints, and how they are handled, on an on-going basis throughout the year.

7. Review

This procedure will be the subject of periodic review in the light of local practice and/or the receipt of changes to national procedures or guidelines.

8. Useful Organisations

Citizens Advice Bureau: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Note that the complaints policy and procedure set out above does not form part of employees' contract of employment and may be changed by the organisation at its absolute discretion at any time.