



Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedures.

Part One: Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clearly outline how the Organisation facilitates obtaining feedback, compliments and complaints from all those who use, or have a connection to our services either directly or indirectly. Both the Advocacy Charter and our Organisational values underpin how we work so we are open and accountable to both the people who use our services and ourselves. **Accountability** is one of the ten principles of the Advocacy Charter and **Integrity** is one of the organisations values which states we will be;

- Open, honest and transparent with our clients, ourselves and other professionals about what we can and cannot do
- Accountable to each other and our clients, to take responsibility for our actions
- Be open to challenge, to reflect on and take responsibility when things don't go as planned
- Celebrate the organisations achievements and success'

Part One details the Policy and Part Two the related Procedures.

2. Scope

This policy and procedure is for the use of clients, carers, volunteers, partner organisations, and members of the public, contractors and other non-employee stakeholders.

In circumstances where staff have a complaint this will be processed under the organisations Grievance Policy and Procedures.

3. Related Documents

- Standard Operating Procedures
- Advocacy Information Sheet
- Advocacy Charter
- Organisational Expectations

4. Responsibilities

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and the Board of Trustees who have a responsibility to raise awareness of the existence of the Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedures. This ensures that when individuals are dissatisfied with the work of Advonet they are aware of their right to complain and how to provide other kinds of feedback.

The Chair of Board of Trustees will make sure that this policy is adhered to. The CEO, Directors and Service Managers will ensure the policy and procedures are promoted and implemented. Throughout this policy when referring to staff, this refers to both paid employees and volunteers.

All staff must understand their role when encouraging and supporting feedback, compliments and complaints, including how these are recorded and acted upon.

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, although it may be reviewed more frequently should practice change.

6. Policy statement

Advonet are committed to providing high quality support and services. In order to do this we actively seek feedback from clients, partner organisations and their workers. We welcome all feedback and accept any complaint made about our services, workers or activities as an opportunity to learn and develop. Advonet fosters a culture where all feedback is viewed in a positive light and essential for developing and delivering our services and upholding the Advocacy Principles.

Advonet do not differentiate between informal and formal complaints.

7. Policy Definitions

A **complaint** is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction, about Advonet, its activities, workers or Board of Trustees.

Complaints may concern the following:-

- A decision by any member of staff or volunteer of the organisation
- The quality of service
- Delay in decision making or delivery of service
- Delay or non-delivery of services
- Quantity, frequency or change of service
- Attitude or behaviour of individuals/organisations delivering the service
- Application of eligibility and assessment criteria

A **compliment** is defined as an expression of praise, about Advonet, its activities, workers or Board of Trustees. This may be written or verbal.

Feedback is defined as comments about how well or how badly someone/the organisation is doing something, which are intended to help them/it to do it better.

The **Complainant** is the person making the complaint.

The **Investigating Officer** is the person who has been asked to look into the complaint.

8. The Advonet Approach

We understand that any failure to respond quickly when a complaint has been received may cause unnecessary anxiety and/or worsen the problem. We aim to resolve any concerns raised quickly, courteously and as straightforwardly as possible within the organisation

We acknowledge that the nature of any serious complaint may result in criminal proceedings, for example in the case of negligence concerning Health and Safety. In the case of a serious complaint the Board of Trustees may need to obtain legal advice.

Complainants have the right to inform the Charity Commission of their complaint and/or the commissioners or funders of the service being complained about.

8.1 We believe we learn the most about how our service(s) can be improved, from our clients and other's experience of it. We respond to complaints, criticisms and feedback regardless of how they are shared with us; in the way that the complainant wishes us to respond. We encourage clients, carers, members of the public or professionals to suggest how we can do things differently.

We can respond to complaints and criticisms more effectively, if you raise your complaint at the time that the problem occurs. However, we recognise that it might only be when you reflect on a situation later that you choose to make a complaint. There may be circumstances where due to time passing, investigating a complaint may be more difficult for example; staff members have left the organisation who are being complained about. In these circumstances we would still progress the complaint and be clear what limitations may apply with the complainant.

We accept complaints in any format and you may wish to complete the feedback form to help you with your complaint, see Appendix One.

8.2 Anonymous complaints and compliments will be recorded in the same way as

other complaints. The fact that the complaint is from an anonymous source will not in itself justify a decision not to pursue the matter.

8.3 What complainants can expect from us:

- That any complaint made will not affect your current or any future services or support from Advonet.
- That if support is required to make a complaint and assist you through the process, such as an independent advocate, or translation or an interpreter we will discuss with you about how we can facilitate this.
- The Complaints Investigator who has been allocated to look into your complaint will establish preferred contact methods and whether you need any help to take part in the investigation in your complaint.
- We will fully investigate any complaint and inform you of the outcome and any next steps.
- All personal information or case records relating to complaints will be treated in confidence and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Information will only be disclosed to those people with a need to know to enable them to investigate the complaint fully.
- Should you wish an advocate employed by Advonet to support you the advocate will;
 - i. Declare a conflict of interest and will support you in line with their duty and responsibilities, ensuring that no information is shared amongst colleagues regarding the complaint.
 - ii. Discuss with you another advocate, including from another organisation, supporting you with any on-going issue so this work is completed

9. Recording Feedback, Compliments and Complaints

All feedback, compliments and complaints received will be recorded in the organisations secure database Charitylog. Feedback and compliments can be logged by anyone however, complaints can only be logged by managers or the Single Point of Access (SPA) team.

10. Complaints Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Monitoring

The Advocacy Director will produce a monthly report for the Senior Management Team setting out the number and nature of all compliments and complaints; as well as other feedback. The Advocacy Director will produce a quarterly report for the Board and as part of its quarterly monitoring report to Commissioners. These reports will be anonymised.

Both reports will use the Department of Health Risk Matrix to be found at Appendix Two; in order to help the Board understand the seriousness of the complaints received.

11. Support for Workers and Volunteers who are complained about

Advonet believe that complainants have a right to be heard, understood and respected. We also believe that these rights apply to the person(s) being complained about. Advonet is aware of the potential impact that having a complaint made against a person has and is committed to providing support in these circumstances. This doesn't in any way undermine the complainant and their complaint.

We expect staff who are complained about to behave in a professional manner towards those who have complained about them. We also recognise that the actions of complainants who feel let down or who may feel angry may result in behaviour towards our staff which is, or is experienced as, being unacceptable. We will, therefore, apply the relevant organisational policies and procedures to support staff who are subject to a complaint from unacceptable behaviour such as threats or offensive behaviour including discrimination.

See Appendix Three for the procedure the organisation will follow in the above event.

Part Two: Procedures

1. Feedback

Feedback may be obtained by a number of different routes including; client forums, staff involvement groups, training and events.

Any feedback provided will be recorded and where required collated and passed to Managers and the SMT.

All feedback will be viewed constructively.

2. Compliments

Any verbal or written compliments will be recorded by the member of staff receiving the compliment in Charitylog and the manager of the service will be informed.

Any member of staff identified as being the subject of, or contributing to any matter giving rise to the compliment will be notified.

3. Complaints

Complaints may be made, by letter, phone or email to any member of staff or by calling the Single Point of Access Team on 0113 244 0606 or by emailing chiefexecutive@advonet.org.uk

The Chief Executive has delegated the administration of the complaints process to the Administrative Services Manager in Advonet. All complaints will be recorded at the point they are received and the relevant information entered into Charitylog.

3.1 Advonet have two stages in the Complaints Procedure:

1. Stage One: Complaint Handling
2. Stage Two: Appeal

3.2 All complaints received by whatever method or format will be passed by **either** the **complainant** or the **member of staff** receiving the complaint to the Administrative Services Manager who will notify the Chief Executive of the complaint.

3.3 Complaints won't be progressed if the same, or a very similar, complaint from the same complainant has already been considered at all stages of the complaints procedure. The Chief Executive will make this determination. This decision can only be appealed by the complainant requesting a review by the Chair of the Quality & Operations Group. The complainant can put this request in writing to the Chief Executive who will pass it on to the Chair of the Quality & Operations Group who will make a decision if the complaint should be investigated. It will then progress to Stage 2.

3.4 The Investigating Officer will always be one grade higher than the member of staff responsible for the situation under investigation (so, for example, a front line member of staff who is subject to a complaint must be investigated by a manager.)

3.5 Stage 1 – Complaint Handling

3.5.1 The Administrative Services Manager or a manager delegated by them, will have an initial conversation with the complainant within **5 working days** of receiving the Complaint.

The purpose of this conversation is to understand the nature and seriousness of the complaint and to ask if the complainant is providing feedback to support the organisations development, or if they wish to progress a complaint. If it's Feedback this will be logged accordingly and if it's a complaint there will be a conversation to see if an initial resolution can be reached at this point. Depending on the outcome of this conversation a resolution will either be agreed and the complaint will be closed or the complaint will be progressed through the following steps.

3.5.2 A manager or other appropriate person will be appointed (the Investigating Officer) to investigate the complaint.

3.5.3 The Administrative Services Manager will write to the complainant to inform them who will be investigating the complaint **within 5 working days**. The Administrative Services Manager will set out a proportionate timescale by which the investigating officer will have reported back to the complainant with their findings. This will be no longer than **20** working days.

- 3.5.4 Where this agreed timescale will be exceeded this will be communicated to the complainant in advance of the deadline date and the reasons for the delay provided.
- 3.5.5 If the complaint is about the Chief Executive, the person receiving the complaint should contact a member of the Senior Management Team who will arrange for a member of the Board to be appointed by the Board of Trustees - other than the Chair - to investigate the complaint.
- 3.5.6 The Investigating Officer will discuss the issue with the complainant either by phone, email or at a meeting. The Investigating Officer will identify others they may need to interview and write a report of how they carried out the investigation and their findings.
- 3.5.7 Following the investigation, a written explanation will be given to the complainant, see Appendix Four. The report will set out the complaint, how it was considered, the lessons learned, the proposed resolution of the complaint and what appropriate action has been taken or is proposed. The report will be signed off by the Investigating Officer and the relevant Director before it is sent.
- 3.5.8 The report has a section that the complainant can complete in response to the findings and the process.
- 3.5.9 It may also be agreed that a face to face meeting with the complainant is also required to go through the report. It is hoped that the issue will have been resolved at this stage and the complainant will be satisfied that their views have been listened to and have no wish to take the matter further.
- 3.5.10 The complaint or complaints will be clearly recorded in the report and in Charitylog as Upheld, Partially Upheld or Not Upheld.
- 3.5.11 If the issue has not been resolved the Stage 2 Appeal can be initiated.
- 3.5.12 There may be occasions whereby the complainant for whatever reason is unable to feedback on Stage 1 or give a clear direction on what they would like to happen next including progressing to Stage 2. In these circumstances we would keep the complaint open for an agreed period of time and then resume the complaints process if requested or close. This period won't exceed 8 weeks.
- 3.5.13 If the complainant remains unable to progress the complaint or make a decision in relation to the complaint we will close the complaint. The complainant has the option of re-opening the complaint and progressing to Stage 2 at a later date. Consideration needs to be given to timescales see section 8.1 of the policy.

3.6 Stage 2 – Appeal

- 3.6.1 A Stage 2 Investigating Officer will be appointed by the Chief Executive, unless the complaint was about the Chief Executive, in which case the Board of Trustees will appoint an Investigating Officer from their own number. The Investigating Officer will be someone who has not previously been involved in the complaint process. A proposed timescale for responses will be agreed by all parties. This will not exceed **20** working days without good reason.

- 3.6.2 The Investigating Officer will review the Stage 1 investigation and associated information if necessary.
- 3.6.3 They may discuss the issue with the complainant either by phone, email or at a meeting if required
- 3.6.4 Identify others they need to interview or re-interview
- 3.6.5 Write a letter of how they carried out the investigation and their findings.
- 3.6.6 Following the investigation, the appointed Investigation Officer will report to the Chief Executive or a panel of Trustees if the complaint was about the Chief Executive. They will give a full explanation of the decision within the agreed timescale. This timescale should not exceed 20 working days without good reason.
- 3.6.7 If the complainant is satisfied with the outcome it should be recorded and the complaint will be closed.
- 3.6.8 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome they have the right to take the matter to the Commissioning or Funding Body and the Local Government Ombudsman. We will provide the complainant with the relevant contact details for this.

4 Remedies and Learning

There are a number of remedies or outcomes to the complaints process which may include an apology, explanation, allocation to another advocate and the implementation of any service and/or organisational learning as a result of the complaint. Information on the latter will be given to the Complainant.

Appendix One: Feedback Form

Complaints and Compliments Feedback Form

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Brief complaint/compliment details, including dates and names where appropriate

If this is a complaint, what would you like to happen to sort it out?

How would you like us to communicate with you?

Phone

Email

Letter

Can we leave a message on your phone? Yes No

Other (please state)

Do you require any support to make your complaint?

No

Yes (please tell us what support you need)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for completing this form. Please send it to us at:

Advonet, Unity Business Centre, 26 Roundhay Road, Leeds, LS7 1AB

Or you can email it to office@advonet.org.uk Please put 'Complaint' in the subject header of the email.

Appendix Two: DoH Risk Assessment Matrix

Guidance

Step 1 - Decide how serious the issue is

Seriousness	Description
Low	Unsatisfactory service or experience not directly related to care. No impact or risk to provision of care.
OR	
Unsatisfactory service or experience related to care, usually a single resolvable issue. Minimal impact and relative minimal risk to the provision of care or the service. No real risk of litigation.	
Medium	Service or experience below reasonable expectations in several ways, but not causing lasting problems. Has potential to impact on service provision. Some potential for litigation.
High	Significant issues regarding standards, quality of care and safeguarding of or denial of rights. Complaints with clear quality assurance or risk management issues that may cause lasting problems for the organisation, and so require investigation. Possibility of litigation and adverse local publicity.
OR	
Serious issues that may cause long-term damage, such as grossly substandard care, professional misconduct or death. Will require immediate and in-depth investigation. May involve serious safety issues. A high probability of litigation and strong possibility of adverse national publicity.	

Step 2: decide how likely the issue is to recur?

Likelihood	Description
Rare	Isolated or 'one off' – slight or vague connection to service provision.
Unlikely	Rare – unusual but may have happened before.
Possible	Happens from time to time – not frequently or regularly.
Likely	Will probably occur several times a year.
Almost certain	Recurring and frequent, predictable.

Step 3: Categorise the risk

Seriousness	Likelihood of recurrence				
	Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost certain
Low	Low				
		Moderate			
Medium					
			High		
High				Extreme	

Appendix Three: Support for Colleagues who are complained about

- Anybody who receives a complaint against them will be informed of this as soon as possible by their line manager (their line manager will be informed by the Chief Executive or the Administrative Services Manager if this responsibility has been delegated to them.)
- The person(s) being complained about will be informed of any measures that will be taken whilst the complaint is being investigated for example; if they will receive support from another manager if the investigating officer is their usual line manager or any agreed contact with the complainant if they are still receiving a service from us. Any support needed will be agreed at this point.
- As part of a complaint investigation, Advonet will always arrange for the person(s) being complained about to provide their response to the issues raised in the complaint.
- Wherever possible, the person(s) being complained about will be given the opportunity to comment on the information provided by the complainant, and to offer any additional information to support their response.
- The person(s) being complained about will receive a copy of any decision outcome sent to the complainant, and this will be provided (wherever possible) at the same time as it is sent to the complainant.
- Irrespective of whether a complaint is upheld or not, the person(s) being complained about will be told straight away about any implications relating to the decision, including any potential 'next steps' and what this might mean for them for example; undergoing additional training.
- The person(s) being complained about will be involved in any learning or actions which result from the complaint outcome decision.
- We will also give the person(s) being complained about the opportunity to discuss their experience with an appropriate person as to how we have dealt with the complaint and how this has impacted on them.
- Staff will be reminded of support that is available from the Employee Assistance Scheme



Complaint Investigation Document Stage One

Date	
Complainant	

Complaint Details

Date complaint made	
Name of person raising the complaint	
Service area(s) being complained about	
What the complaint relates to	
Name of Investigating Officer	

Summary of Complaint

Outcome or Action the Complainant Would Like to Resolve their Complaint

Complaint Outcome

Background Information

Information Taken into Account

Scope of complaint

Timeline of Complaint Process and Investigation

Date	Action Taken or Information Received

What we have learnt from Your Feedback / Complaint

Feedback from Complainant

If you are unhappy with our response at Stage 1 please tell us why in the box below. If you would like to have your complaint looked at again please respond within 8 weeks or we will need to close your complaint as unresolved. If you want us to look at your complaint again this will be done by a different Investigating Officer under Stage 2 of Advonet's Complaints Policy.

Signed:

Date: