

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance

Compliments and Complaints Policy & Procedure

May 2024

Purpose

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance strives to provide high quality services for the Voluntary and Community Sector of Sunderland. We want individuals to be satisfied with our services and any compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints are helpful to us. We want to know when things are going well, as well as when things go wrong.

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance considers every encounter between staff and clients to be an opportunity to learn from people's experiences of its services. This learning should be used to continuously improve the quality of these experiences as well as our services and so increase the organisation's accountability to those it serves.

This policy clarifies how someone may share a compliment, suggestion, concern or complaint with Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance. This policy also lays out the procedures the organisation will use to help resolve concerns and complaints when they are received.

Principles

Value people's choices.

Whilst Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance aims to treat every compliment, suggestion, concern or complaint seriously, whether informally or formally made, it recognises that many people value the choice of whether the organisation uses an informal (discussion with local staff) or formal route to address the matters they have raised. It is important to allow for this flexibility in designing person-centred ways of resolving people's concerns and complaints.

Upholding people's rights.

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance further recognises that raising a concern or complaint about its staff or services and having it dealt with thoroughly and respectfully is an important right of individuals.

Acting with integrity.

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance processes and duties will aim to reflect these principles by effective handling of concerns and complaints by:

- Getting it right
- Being client focused
- Being open and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Seeking continuous improvement

Being open and honest.

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance expects all investigations into concerns and complaints to be transparent. Where mistakes have been made or things have not gone well, responsibility will be taken and a genuine apology given. Early meetings to discuss and address concerns in person are encouraged and an agreement will be gained regarding how best to remain in ongoing communication with those who have raised concerns.

Maintaining confidentiality.

Information provided by those sharing a compliment or suggestion or raising a concern or complaint will be recorded on our data base carefully and securely by the person who first receives it. All staff have a duty to adhere to Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance guidelines and policies on confidentiality and data protection in line with GDPR and correct permissions should be sought before information is passed on to other parties.

Offering compassion and credibility.

It is very important that the accounts given by clients of their experiences of Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance services are taken seriously and given credibility as people's real experiences. Those raising concerns or complaints should always be treated with respect, empathy and compassion. At the same time, staff members who are involved in a complaint should be given support and their own experiences taken seriously. The purpose of the complaints procedure is not to apportion blame, but to investigate situations fairly so everyone can learn from what has taken place and to achieve a resolution.

Accessing information about how to share a compliment or suggestion or raise a concern or complaint.

Information on how to raise or share a compliment, suggestion, concern or complaint is given in the Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance Compliment and Complains leaflet. The leaflet is downloadable from Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance website.

A free copy of the leaflet can be sent out to individuals on request by contacting us on 07825094839 or by emailing contactus@sunderlandvsa.co.uk.

As part of Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance staff induction all staff receive a copy of the compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints policy and procedures. This is to ensure staff understand the process and if required make it accessible to those they support.

The Procedure

How to make a compliment, suggestion, concern or complaint about a service from Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance?

Individuals can do this verbally, by email, telephone, letter, card, to a member of staff or volunteer or by completing the form provided appendix 1.

How compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints inform future planning?

All compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints recorded by individual staff and outcomes are also recorded. Reports are then generated and analysed on a quarterly basis. Findings are fed up to Senior Management to inform service improvements and planning.

Information received from individuals will be held securely for one year then destroyed in line with GDPR.

Why complain?

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance know sometimes things can go wrong - mistakes can be made, people may be unhelpful or insensitive, there may be actions or comments which are unacceptable. When these things happen Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance want to know about them.

Dealing with concerns or complaints

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance staff are encouraged to try to resolve a problem quickly. Whenever possible the complainant should discuss their concern with a member of staff or a volunteer.

If individuals are unhappy about doing this, or are dissatisfied with the outcome after they have spoken with a Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance member of staff or volunteer – individuals can make a complaint to the **Alliance Manager**.

What happens next?

The complainant or a person of their choice, can write down their complaint using the form provided appendix 1 or via the website.

If an individual makes a complaint it will be investigated thoroughly. Once a written complaint is received the complainant will receive written acknowledgement within 7 days.

If a complaint in relation to an employee turns out to be well-founded a full investigation will be undertaken in line with the organisations disciplinary policy and procedures.

The investigation may take time and is likely to involve the complainant discussing their complaint with the Alliance Manager. If a meeting is necessary, the complainant should be accompanied by someone to support or represent them.

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance will try to complete the investigation and write to the complainant with the outcome within 28 working days of receiving the complaint. If this timescale cannot be met a holding letter will be sent.

What to do next if the complainant are still unhappy.

If the complainant does not agree with the Alliance Manager's decision they can ask for the matter to be considered by a **Review Panel** with a minimum of two Trustees. The Review Panel will consist of members of Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance Board of Trustees. There will be a hearing of the complaint at which the complainant and their representative should be present. Where it is possible the Review Panel will decide within 24 hours what recommendations to make about the complaint.

Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance want individuals to feel comfortable raising a concern or complaint and will ensure all complaints are dealt with fairly.

Appendix 1**Customer Complaint Form**

Basic Details

Name:

Position (if applicable):

Person Complaint is Against:

Person Complaint Reported
to:

Time / Date:

Location:

Reasons for Complaint

1

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Please Expand on the Above Reasons:**Action to be Taken:**

| | | | |
|-------------------|--|--------------|--|
| Signature: | | Date: | |
|-------------------|--|--------------|--|