

Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association
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Quality Assurance Policy Complaints Procedure

Complaints Procedure

1. INTRODUCTION

a) Objectives of policy

Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association aims at excellence in all it provides and so wants to know what service users and others think about those services. If any person who has contact with Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association is not happy with the service they receive, we want to know, so that the service (or specific parts of it) can be reviewed and improved.

Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association recognises that things go wrong sometimes and complaints are one way of identifying what those things are and gives a view on what the service user or others expect. Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association then has to take a view as to whether the expectation is something Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association should be achieving or should be striving to achieve.

Managers and staff will listen to and act on the views and concerns of service users and others about our services, and encourage discussion and action on issues raised by service users before they develop into problems and formal complaints.

However, complaints are welcomed by Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association as a means of problem-solving and improving services and this policy aims:

- to make a comment or complaining a simple, understandable and useful process for service users, staff and others.
- to have a process where the emphasis is on sorting out the difficulty that has arisen to the satisfaction, as far as possible, of all involved.
- to encourage and expect follow up to complaints which allows learning and attempts to prevent similar situations from arising in the future
- to make everyone aware of good practice so that it can be duplicated throughout the organisation.



Contract Requirements: Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association has a contract with Croydon Local Authority. They have requirements and expectations which vary but can include:

- the need to have a complaints procedure in place
- explaining the procedure to service users
- the monitoring of complaints

c) Related Policies

Service users can complain about any aspect of the services Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association provides, as well as any persons involved with service users or anyone who is involved with Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association, such as other agencies.

This means that every policy or procedure that Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association has, is related to this policy; and should be considered as a policy that can be changed, reviewed or updated as a result of complaints that are made.

d) Resources

All complaints will be investigated and the necessary staff time found to respond to complaints within the targets set out below.

2. EXPECTATIONS

a) Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association

- takes all complaints seriously
- will involve service users in the review of this policy and procedure
- will review and document this policy at least every two years
- monitor that this policy is being kept
- welcomes comments on its services
- ensure that a copy of this policy is included in the welcome pack and that each new service user understands it fully

b) The Co-ordinator will:

- ensure that all staff are inducted on the complaints procedure and their role in helping service users to understand and use it
- ensure that a copy of this policy is included in the welcome pack that each new service user receives. This includes getting it translated into a format which the service user will find accessible, if necessary.
- ensure that each service user has a copy of the complaints leaflet
- take all complaints seriously and investigate them fully and thoroughly
- respond to complaints within the time scales set out below
- ensure all staff know about this policy and Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association's view that complaints should be encouraged

- investigate all complaints and speak to any staff, service user or others who are involved as soon as appropriate
- be honest with staff about the possibility of disciplinary action and inform staff as soon as possible if (after initial investigation) there could be a case for any disciplinary action against them
- record all complaints, including those made by telephone to them and keep a record of replies made and actions taken, with regard to the complaint (Appendix 3)
- support staff and service users through the complaints process, including if a complaint has been made about them
- report complaints to relevant bodies according to contractual requirements

c) All Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association employees will:

- ensure that all service users with whom they have contact understand how to make a complaint if they want to
- take complaints seriously
- support service users to be represented by a independent advocate, if required
- deal with complaints according to this policy and the procedures within it
- take a problem solving approach to all complaints (following the customer care standards)
- give any service user who is/seems to be, unhappy with the service, the option of making a complaint and the details of how to contact the Co-ordinator. It is expected that this information be given in such a way as not to leave the service user feeling that they should not, (or it would be better if they did not), make a complaint
- listen to complaints from service users with an open mind and if the complaint involves staff behaviour, all staff are expected to consider the complaint with a view to changing their behaviour, actions and/or attitude as appropriate
- discuss complaints made by service users with their Co-ordinator or, in his absence his Deputy.
- respect the privacy of service users and other staff members involved in complaints

d) Expectations of Service users:

- Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association would welcome constructive criticism regarding any part of our services.
- to follow the complaints procedure

3. MAKING COMPLAINTS

a) What is a complaint?

In general terms, this complaints procedure should be used where a service user wants to make a complaint about the way a decision was made, the way a situation was handled, or about a process/policy that is in place.



Examples would be:-

- where we are not delivering a service we have said we will
- this is not done in the agreed time
- generally not keeping to our word
- where staff are rude and unhelpful
- where the wrong information has been given to a service user/s by staff

b) Who can complain?

Anyone who uses Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association services, also friends, relatives, or other professionals, can complain; if they are unhappy with the service that a service user is receiving, or the service they have received.

This policy is a guide for anyone who wishes to make a complaint and the expectations and procedures for staff handling complaints. Services users, their families or others in contact with Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association have a right to make a complaint in any way that they wish and starting at any level.

Both staff and service users should be supported through the complaints process and also if a complaint has been made about them. Service users may need to be allocated a different worker for a period of time and staff always have the right to seek advice and support, for example, from a colleague, or their trade union, if a member of one.

c) The Processes

The process is set out with consideration to service users and as a guide for staff when advising about the procedure or dealing with complaints. Service users complaints will be dealt with however they are made (e.g., verbal or in writing) and whom ever they are made to.

Basic procedure – Option One

Initial Contact – Talking to a Staff Member / Volunteer

Usually a service user will first talk to a member of staff, or a Volunteer, when they are unhappy about something (but this is not always the case, particularly if it is that person they are unhappy with). Staff will try to resolve the issue, or explain why this is not possible. The staff member/volunteer should tell the service user that they can contact the Co-ordinator, if they are not satisfied. The Service User should also be told the other options which are available.

The options are:

- contacting the relevant local authority or health authority if the complaint involves a registered or community project
- have access to an independent advocate

Step 1 – Talking to the Co-ordinator

When a service user contacts the co-ordinator to complain:

If the complaint is made on the telephone, it may be possible to deal with it on the telephone. In any case, (telephone, in person, in writing), the manager should give the service user an option of a meeting and if this is taken up an option of whether or not the designated worker is present (for part or all of the meeting). Many complaints can be settled in this way. The Manager should write to the service user confirming the outcome, including if the complaint was made and dealt with over the telephone. Notes of meetings or conversations should be placed with correspondence on the client file or if confidential (for example, relating to a staff member) it should be placed in a confidential file in a filing cabinet).

Step 2 – Contacting the Trustees

This stage of the procedure involves the trustees. When contacted by a service user making a complaint the chair or vice chair, if relevant, will discuss the complaint and respond within three working days in writing. It may be possible to resolve the complaint in that time. If not, there should be a holding letter with an outline of what is being done (e.g. an investigation) and a statement of when next the service user will hear from you. All complaints lasting over two weeks should have updates to the service user weekly until resolved.

Step 3 – Appeal to the Trustees

The service user can appeal the decision of the Trustees. When contacted, the Chair/vice chair will write to the service user within three working days explaining that a panel is being formed to consider the complaint. A date should be set for a panel meeting within 4 weeks (sooner if the subject matter is time sensitive). The panel should be made up of trustees who were not part of stage 2, lead by either the chair or the vice-chair, again dependent on who led stage 2.

The details of the case are sent out prior to the meeting so that the panel has time to read the papers and if necessary ask for more information. The service user plus their advocate should be given the opportunity to appear before the panel to state the reasons for the appeal.

The Chair of the panel should write to the service user within three working days of the panel meeting.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

The Management Committee has overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with this Policy and that complaints are dealt with and appropriate action taken and that they are dealt with are in accordance with this policy.

5. MONITORING

Equality Monitoring

This is a difficult area to monitor initially as we do not ask for formal notification of a complaint (such as a complaints form). The first time we ask for written feedback from complainants is in the feedback after the complaint has been dealt with. This form will include a monitoring form, reflecting areas Addiscombe Neighbourhood





Care Association is currently monitoring as standard. It will include the reason we ask for such information and what it is used for.

6. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Addiscombe Neighbourhood Care Association understands that complaints can be a sensitive issue and will minimize the number of people involved in complaints. It may though, sometimes be the case that investigations have to be carried out which could involve staff/volunteers (outside of those mentioned above) and, as rarely as possible, other service users. Care will be taken with such investigations and the information given will be kept to a minimum.

It is expected that service users are kept up to date with what is happening. It is, however, essential that feedback is only given that respects the privacy of workers and other service users. The same care should be taken when feedback needs to be given to staff/volunteers, either for investigation purposes, or otherwise





Appendix 1 Example Managers letter – delete before sending!

**Full address
Telephone & extension
Email
Fax**

**Type in name and
address of
service user**

date

Dear (type in name of service user)

Re: Complaint made to (select and replace with name) on (select and replace with date of complaint)

Thank you for your letter/telephone call dated/on [insert] regarding [insert topic of complaint]. I will be investigating your complaint and will contact you requesting more information/or write to you with the outcome of the investigation, as soon as possible.

If I have not completed my investigations within two weeks of the date of the complaint, you will receive an update on the situation and then another update every two weeks after that until the situation is resolved.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on [telephone number] for any further information.

Yours sincerely

[Name]
Co-ordinator





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