



Registered Office
Unit 9, Brewery Yard
Deva City Office Park
Salford
M3 7BB

+44 (0)161 236 2182
support@wearesurvivors.org.uk
wearesurvivors.org.uk
Twitter: @ThisIsSurvivors
Facebook: /ThisIsSurvivors

Governance Policy

Service User Complaints Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL

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SERVICE USER COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. General Statement

We Are Survivors is committed to safeguarding vulnerable adults and aims to maintain high standards in all its work, but we recognise that we can sometimes get things wrong despite our best intentions.

Without the feedback of our service users on these occasions we would not be able to improve the service we offer to them in the future, and therefore we value and take seriously any feedback they provide.

The scope of this document concerns the handling of complaints by individuals who use the We Are Survivors service. This policy does not concern internal complaints by staff and operates independently of policies relating to staff disciplinary matters or internal staff complaints.

2. Rights & Responsibilities

Responsibilities of We Are Survivors:

- To ensure that staff engaged in or supporting our work understand our complaints procedure
- To endeavour to resolve complaints as promptly and amicably as possible
- To maintain a record of all complaints and the correspondence related to them

Responsibilities of Employees, Volunteers & Student Placements:

- All staff of We Are Survivors have a duty to be familiar with the complaints policy and procedures
- All staff will take appropriate action in line with the policies of We Are Survivors
- Any member of staff required to handle a complaint must maintain a record of all complaints and the correspondence related to them

3. Good Practice

a) Training

We Are Survivors will familiarise all employees, volunteers and student placements with We Are Survivors' policies and procedures during their induction period.

All We Are Survivors employees and volunteers will have access to training (internal or external) with respect to handling complaints on an annual basis.

b) Record Keeping

We Are Survivors will maintain a written record of any complaints made by service users. This confidential information will be kept in a locked drawer by the appropriate person and will be kept for as long as deemed necessary, in line with Data Protection principles.

Records kept by employees of We Are Survivors about service user complaints should be kept confidential, and not be released externally to the organisation unless statutorily obliged or requested by the service user.

4. Methods of Complaint

Formal complaints must where possible be made in writing, either by letter or on the We Are Survivors Complaints Form (appendix 1 to this document), and should provide the following details:

- The reason for the complaint; and
- Where and when it happened; and
- The name(s) of anyone involved (if known); and
- What outcome the complainant is hoping for; and
- The complainant's contact details (name, address, daytime telephone number and/or email)

Any service user complaint should be submitted to:

We Are Survivors, Unit 9 Brewery Yard, Deva City Office Park, Trinity Way, Salford M3 7BB or via email admin@wearesurvivors.org.uk

Where it has been established that there exists a barrier to the service user personally completing the form in writing, such as physical or other disability; learning difficulties; limited English literacy; or other significant difficulty, the service user may request the assistance of a member of staff to help them put their complaint in writing.

This assistance should be provided within a reasonable period of time following the request, considering staff availability and safety. Where it is considered that assistance in person with completing the Complaints Form may put that member of staff at risk, or for reasons of limited staff availability, this assistance may be given to the service user by telephone, at the discretion of the staff team.

5. Procedure for Handling a Formal Complaint

The aim of the Complaints Procedure is always to achieve resolution of the service user's complaint at the earliest stage possible.

a) Stage One: Review by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer

At first instance the complaints procedure starts locally with the Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

Should the Deputy Chief Executive Officer be the subject of the complaint, the service user may circumvent Stage One and commence their complaint at Stage Two.

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and carry out a full investigation into the circumstances surrounding it, which may include examination of the Service Users records to check that proper procedures were followed and the best advice given; interview with appropriate members of staff.

The target time for responding in full to a complaint is 25 working days, though, if the issue is complicated, any delay must be explained.

If the complaint is upheld, the service user should receive a full apology and, where appropriate, be given details of any action that the service was able to take to retrieve the situation or at least put things right for the future.

The letter sent to the service user informing them of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint at Stage One must also inform them of their right to ask for a review of the investigation should they not be satisfied with the outcome of stage one. Details of how to do this must be provided.

Any member of staff involved in the complaint will be notified of the outcome.

b) Stage Two: Review by the Chief Executive Officer

If the service user wishes to appeal to the decision of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, they can request a review to be conducted by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer will:

- review the original complaint; and
- ensure that the complaints process has been carried out properly and fairly; and
- will check that the fundamental issues have been investigated fully

The Chief Executive Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days.

The target time for responding in full to a complaint is 30 working days, though, if the issue is complicated, any delay must be explained.

The review will produce a full response, which will contain sufficient information to show that the complaint has been fully investigated, and an apology where appropriate.

Any member of staff involved in the complaint will be notified of appeal and final decision.

The decision of the Chief Executive Officer is final.

6. Monitoring of Policies

We Are Survivors will review this policy on an annual basis.

We Are Survivors will immediately review this policy in light of new findings or changes to the reporting procedure.