



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

For complaints made by individuals and organisations about The Society of Homeopaths

Introduction

Complaints are an important way for management to be accountable to the public, as well as providing valuable prompts to review organisational performance and the conduct of people that work within and for it.

A complaint is an “expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products and/or services, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected”.

Effective complaint handling provides three key benefits to the Society:

- It resolves issues raised by a person who is dissatisfied in a timely and cost-effective way;
- It provides information that can lead to improvements in service delivery; and
- Where complaints are handled properly, a good system can improve the reputation of an organisation and strengthen public confidence in an organisation’s administrative processes

Members of the public want

- a user friendly complaint handling system
- to be heard and understood
- to be respected
- an explanation
- an apology
- action as soon as possible

The organisation needs:

- a user friendly system for accepting feedback
- clear delegation and procedures for staff to deal with complaints and provide remedial action
- a recording system to capture complaint data
- to use complaints data to identify problems and trends
- to improve service delivery in identified areas

Enabling complaints - Arrangements for enabling people to make complaints are customer focused, visible, accessible and valued and supported by management.

Responding to complaints - Complaints are responded to promptly and handled objectively, fairly and confidentially. Remedial action is provided where complaints are upheld and there is a system for review.

Accountability and learning – There is clear accountability for complaint handling and complaints are used to stimulate organisational improvements.

Anonymous or third party complaints – will not be dealt with under this procedure. It is at the discretion of the Society as to how these are handled. Where there is reason to believe that a complaint is vexatious or malicious, the matter will be referred to the Society’s Management Team who will consider it under the vexatious complaints policy.

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1 HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

1.1 If you wish to make a complaint, write, giving full details (including your name and postal address) and enclose any supporting documentation to the:

Chief Executive, The Society of Homeopaths, 11 Brookfield, Duncan Close, Moulton Park, Northampton NN3 6WL.

Please mark your envelope confidential. Sending your correspondence by Recorded Delivery ensures proof of both postage and receipt. Keep a copy of anything you send to us.

2 STAGE 1 - LOCAL RESOLUTION

2.1 Generally, the purpose of this Complaints Procedure is to resolve disputes informally without resorting to formal investigation or legal proceedings. Managers dealing with complaints must always explore every option to resolve complaints by working with the complainant to agree an outcome which is satisfactory to them and to the Society. Although the Responsible Manager may obtain information and speak to people involved, a clear distinction must always be maintained between this stage of the process and formal investigation which is part of Stage 2.

2.2 On receiving a complaint, the Chief Executive will pass the matter to the Responsible Manager within one working day. The Responsible Manager or,

in their absence, a nominated deputy will acknowledge each complaint within a maximum of two working days.

2.3 The Responsible Manager shall consider whether the complaint should be escalated to Stage 2 (Formal Investigation) immediately where the severity of the complaint warrants this. In such cases, the Responsible Manager will refer the complaint to the Second Responsible Manager who will make the decision.

2.4 The Responsible Manager will try to resolve the complaint informally and in a timely way so that a response can be provided within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint. The response will include sending a written summary of the Responsible Manager's conclusions, and any action taken, to the complainant.

2.5 The Society will make every effort to be sensitive to the complainant's background and individual circumstances, for example their gender, first language, sexuality and any disabilities they may have.

2.6 It is good practice, at Stage 1 of a complaint, that representative(s) of the Society should offer to meet face to face with the complainant wherever practicable.

3 STAGE 2 – FORMAL INVESTIGATION

3.1 Unless the complaint has been immediately referred to Stage 2, if the complainant remains dissatisfied after the Society's response under Stage 1, then they should inform the Responsible Manager that the complaint has not been resolved.

3.2 Complainants should put their reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome at Stage 1 in writing to Chief Executive within 14 working days from receiving the outcome of the Stage 1 process but if this timescale is exceeded it will not exclude the pursuance of the complaint.

3.3 The Responsible Manager will escalate the complaint within two working days to the Second Responsible Manager or in their absence a nominated deputy who will decide whether a formal investigation will be undertaken. The decision will be communicated to the complainant within a further two working days.

3.4 The Second Responsible Manager will complete a formal investigation within 20 working days of the decision to proceed to Stage 2. If, in exceptional circumstances, this timescale cannot be met, the Second Responsible Manager will provide an update to the complainant and agree a revised timescale. The Second Responsible Manager should make all reasonable efforts to meet with the complainant unless this has already taken place at Stage 1 and a further meeting is considered unnecessary.

3.5 The outcome of the formal investigation will be communicated to the complainant within five working days of the conclusion of the investigation.

4 STAGE 3 – INTERNAL APPEAL

4.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 2, then they should communicate that dissatisfaction within 14 days of the date the Stage 2 outcome has been communicated. If necessary this timescale will be extended and managers should not close down further consideration of the complaint on timescale grounds.

4.2 The complainant will be asked to provide reasons why they are not satisfied with outcomes to Stages 1 and 2 of the Complaints Procedure in order to inform the internal appeal.

4.3 The Second Responsible Manager will escalate the complaint within two working days to the Vice Chair, or a nominated deputy, who will conduct the internal appeal. Confirmation that the internal appeal is being undertaken will be communicated to the complainant within five working days of receiving the internal appeal request.

4.4 The Vice Chair conducting the appeal will review documentation relating to Stages 1 and 2 of the complaint process including the way in which the complaint was handled at local level. The review may also include a meeting with the complainant, or any staff member or consultant involved, if the Vice Chair considers this necessary.

4.5 The Vice Chair will either uphold the findings, decisions and actions taken or identify and offer to implement an alternative resolution(s) (which may include upholding the original complaint).

4.6 The outcome of the Internal Appeal must be communicated to the complainant within 20 working days of receiving the internal appeal request.

5 DESCRIPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

5.1 **Complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction about the Society of Homeopaths, including the standards of service provided, which an individual(s) and/or an organisation(s) claims to have affected them. This excludes complaints by Society Board members, employees and consultants delivering a Society service, for whom there are separate procedures.

5.2 **Responsible Manager** means the Society employee responsible for day to day management of the practice area to which the complaint relates.

5.3 **Serious Complaint** means a complaint of a serious nature, that could lead to legal proceedings.

5.4 **Second Responsible Manager** means the Responsible Manager's line manager.

