



Mencap policies and procedures



Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure - External

This procedure is for people who use Royal Mencap Society services and their families, Mencap donors, supporters, sponsors and the general public.

The procedure does not relate to other Mencap branded activity, or the activity of any other organisation that we work with which may use the Mencap brand.

This procedure is not for former or current employees who are required to raise concerns through our HR processes.

This process is owned by: **Quality Directorate**

- We recognise the need to be open and transparent both about complaints and the processes we follow, to ensure people can tell us what is and isn't working in how we approach our work.
- Understanding what is and is not working supports us to take the right action to improve.
- This procedure covers all of Royal Mencap Society activities.

Date of issue: **December 2019**

Next review date: **December 2022**

We are
Passionate
about making
the world a
better place

We are
Inclusive
of everyone

We are
BRAVE
we challenge
and try new
things

We are
Positive
in our work
and with each
other

We are
Kind
to everyone

Introduction

Royal Mencap Society (Mencap) is a not-for-profit charity providing a variety of services to people with learning disabilities, their families, friends and professionals.

Our work is guided by the principles of being person-centred. We know how important it is to listen and learn from the people we work with about what's working well, and what we can do better.

People with learning disabilities, their families, friends, our donors, supporters, and members of the public all have valuable perspectives and opinions about our work, so, wherever they come from, we use every compliment, complaint or piece of feedback to learn lessons and take the right action.

This procedure exists to ensure that people know how to raise complaints, compliments and give feedback to us, and can be confident about how these will be managed through to their conclusion. We have also developed an easy-read resource for the people we support on how to raise a formal complaint.

Every complaint and compliment we receive will be dealt with in line with this process, even if it has been escalated to senior leaders within the organisation.

Definitions

The procedure relates to feedback, compliments and complaints as defined as:

Feedback: Naturally occurring information that is usually received verbally and informally. Feedback might be positive or negative, can be acted on immediately and is used to reflect/improve how we undertake our work.

Compliments: Usually a more formal expression of thanks. Compliments may be shared verbally, through cards, letters or emails or through positive communications shared with others (e.g. a manager or other colleague).

Complaints: A formal communication raising dissatisfaction with an activity/experience that have fallen short of the expectations of the person complaining, or of those expected of our colleagues more generally. Complaints are usually expressed formally by letter, email or telephone, although we may talk to a person about raising a complaint if we feel this is appropriate following an informal conversation.

Feedback, compliments and complaints are all extremely valuable as a means of informing and improving our work. We log feedback, compliments and complaints to inform our learning.

Complaints usually require a much more structured process to be sure that necessary action is taken and that, where possible, those who raise complaints with us are satisfied with both our methods, and the outcomes achieved. As such, the remainder of this procedure relates solely to complaints, and the processes we follow.

Our Approach

The relationships we hold with the people we work with, be they people with learning disabilities, their families or friends, donors, supporters or members of the public are vital to us. As in all relationships, it is natural for issues to arise and for people to want to raise their concerns when they do so. When this happens, we:

- Provide a formal process to be followed when issues are raised to ensure that we investigate them promptly and thoroughly.
- Treat each complaint equally regardless of who raises them and undertake thorough investigations in every case.
- Keep a record of all of the complaints that we receive to provide us with insight into how people experience our activities and what we may need to improve.
- Produce monthly accountability reports on compliments, complaints and learning for senior managers.
- Compile an annual compliments and complaints report for Royal Mencap Society, which includes an analysis of trends and learning.
- Keep a record of all of the complaints that we receive to provide us with insight into how people experience our activities and what we may need to improve.
- Follow each complaint with tangible action where our work or conduct falls short to ensure that we make any required improvements to our ways of working.
- Fulfill all of our external reporting responsibilities regarding complaints, and/or their outcomes.
- Link with our other internal processes (e.g. safeguarding/ disciplinary policies) to ensure necessary actions are followed when they are required.
- Ensure that all Royal Mencap Society colleagues are aware of their responsibilities under this procedure.

We know that when we manage complaints it isn't all about process. Our behaviours, values and beliefs are just as important to ensure that people feel confident in our response to issues, therefore:

- We are respectful of people's right to complain, open to the learning that comes as a result and we behave professionally throughout the process.
- We ensure that complaints and their outcomes cause no harm to our enduring relationships with the complainant, or (where applicable) the people we support.

- We know the importance of the relationships we hold, and provide support for these before, during and after complaints are made.
- We recognise that people can feel anxious about making a complaint, or the process that follows, and that professionalism, communication and reassurance are important.
- We ensure that we maintain openness and accept responsibility when we get things wrong.

Procedure

A complaint can be submitted in writing (by email or letter) or verbally (by phone or in person) to any of our management colleagues, and through our website. We usually ask that complaints are submitted to the manager closest to the issue of concern because this helps us to ensure that it is investigated locally with greater opportunity for faster outcomes.

When a complaint is raised with us, it is logged to ensure we capture issues at the initial stage.

We will confirm with the complainant at the earliest opportunity:

- What we will do
- How long they can expect the process to take
- How they would like to be contacted
- What will happen in the event of any delays

We will acknowledge all complaints within 3 working days by email or letter. We try to resolve complaints within 25 working days, ensuring that we maintain communication during this time, and after if things take longer than planned.

Our procedure contains 3 stages. At each stage of our process, the complaint and our response will be subject to management oversight and sign off.

Stage 1

What is the purpose: At this stage, complaints are managed by the manager closest to the issue, with a view to ensuring that actions to resolve concerns are taken promptly.

Who is responsible: The manager of the service or department.

Who will sign-off: The responsible person's manager. This manager must evaluate the complaint response to confirm they are happy for it to be sent to the complainant. They will do this within 25 working days of receiving the complaint.

What is the outcome: The complaint will either be resolved or a review will be requested (see stage 3). The manager will communicate the outcome of the complaint back to the complainant.

Stage 2

What is the purpose: Some complaints cannot be managed by the manager who is most local to the complaint and may need to be investigated at a more senior level.

Who is responsible: The Area or Locality Manager/Head of Department.

Who will sign-off: The responsible person's manager with support from the Complaints Officer, as required. This manager must evaluate the complaint response to confirm they are happy for it to be sent to the complainant. They will do this within 25 working days of receiving the complaint.

What is the outcome: The complaint will either be resolved, or a review will be requested (see stage 3). The manager will communicate the outcome of the complaint back to the complainant.

Stage 3

What is the purpose: At this stage, if the complainant is dissatisfied with how their complaint has been managed, a review can be undertaken to ensure that the process has been followed correctly to reach a fair and reasonable outcome.

Who is responsible: Complaints Officer.

Who will sign-off: Relevant Director and Compliance Manager.

How long will it take: We will aim to complete the review within 25 working days of the complainant expressing they are dissatisfied with the management of their complaint. If this is not possible, the complainant will be notified, and a new timescale will be agreed.

What is the outcome: The complainant will receive a written letter detailing the outcome of the review, including whether any further action will be taken by Royal Mencap Society.

Complaining to external agencies

If a complainant still feels that Mencap has not treated them fairly or done all we reasonably could, then they have the right to take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and ask for it to be reviewed. The Ombudsman provides a free and independent service.¹

We provide care and support to adults, children and young people that is subject to external regulation. Whilst these regulators do not have the powers to investigate or resolve complaints made to us, they do welcome concerns, feedback or compliments about the service providers they regulate.

If a complaint has been made about our fundraising activity, and the complainant is not happy with our response, they can make a complaint to the Fundraising Regulator.

If a complaint has been made about how we handle personal information and the complainant is not happy with our response, or they believe their data protection or privacy rights have been infringed, they can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office.

¹ See Appendix 1 for the contact details of external agencies

A.1. Appendix 1

Ombudsman contact details

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (England)

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Telephone: 0300 790 0203

Website: www.ombudsman.wales

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Telephone: 02890 233 821

Website: www.nispo.org.uk

Regulator contact details

Care Quality Commission

Telephone: 03000 616 161

Website: www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us

Care Inspectorate Wales

Telephone: 0300 790 0126

Website: www.careinspectorate.wales/contact-us

Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

Telephone: 028 9536 1111

Website: www.rqia.org.uk/contact/complaints-feedback

Ofsted

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.contact.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-form

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust – Early Years Team

Telephone: 028 950 42811

Website: www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/contact

The Fundraising Regulator

Telephone: 0300 999 3407

Website: www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints

Information Commissioner's Office

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint

Education and Skills Funding Agency

Telephone: 0800 015 0600

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency

Email: helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk