

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

POLICY

1. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint shall mean: -

A written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or concern relating to the everyday operations of the services provided by Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen. This dissatisfaction could include the actions of the organisation's personnel, their failure to act, or delay in acting which requires the organisation to account for its conduct.

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen is committed to an effective complaints and suggestions procedure.
- 2.2 Each formal complaint will be acknowledged by the organisation in writing within 7 working days of receipt.
- 2.3 When appropriate, complaints will be dealt with informally by the staff member directly responsible for the service. These complaints will be recorded.
- 2.4 Effective recording and monitoring of complaints will provide useful information about the quality and effectiveness of our services, and areas for improvement and development.
- 2.5 Assistance will be offered, where necessary, in understanding, interpreting or translating this procedure and using it effectively.

3. THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

At each stage of the procedure the complainant is entitled to have an advocate representing their interests. The advocate will need to show that the complainant has requested their help. At any stage of the procedure the advocate may speak on the complainant's behalf.

3.1 Informal Complaints

It is recognised that from time to time misunderstandings may arise on minor matters that will require clarification and explanation.

It is the aim of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen to resolve any such matters as quickly and as near to the point of origin as possible. If the complaint is about an individual then a discussion will take place between the complainant and the individual. If the complaint is about a service then a discussion will take place between the complainant and the service manager. If the matter is resolved a record will be kept of action taken using the Internal Complaints form.

3.2 Formal Complaint

The formal complaints procedure will take the form of 3 stages: -

Date of policy issued:

Date of policy review:

Stage 1

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the Informal Stage then the matter will be treated as a formal complaint. The Senior/Line Manager of the person or service involved will fully investigate the matter and interview all parties concerned and will reach a decision within 7 working days of the complaint becoming formal. The complainant will be informed of this decision in writing. This will include the decision arrived at, details of the steps taken to investigate and reference to the second stage of the procedure.

Stage 2

If the Senior/Line Manager has been unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, then the complainant can refer the matter to the Chief Officer. This must be done in writing, within 7 working days of the decision arrived at Stage 1 of the procedure. The Chief Officer will acknowledge the letter in writing within 7 working days of receipt. The Chief Officer will investigate the complaint and provide the complainant with a full written response within 14 working days of receipt. This will include the decision arrived at, details of the steps taken to investigate and reference to the third and final stage of the procedure. A record will be kept of the information gathered and the decision made.

3.3 Stage 3 - Review by a Panel

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision arrived at, at Stage 2, then they have the right to have their complaint heard by the Review Panel.

The complainant has 10 working days within which to request a review by the Panel and an application must be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Board. The Panel will consist of three members of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen's Board and will meet to discuss the complaint within 10 working days of the request being made. The Review Panel will then inform the complainant of their decision in writing within 10 working days of their meeting. The decision of the Review Panel will be final.

- 3.4 This procedure is intended to be a flexible one and Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen acknowledges that there may be occasions when earlier stages of the procedure should be bypassed. Where serious allegations are made, the appropriate Senior Manager should be involved at the outset. Complaints regarding the Chief Officer shall be referred to the Chair.

4. RECORDING

- 4.1 For formal complaints all paperwork including copies of letters and details of any investigations will be held on file.
- 4.2 It is recognised that there will be occasions where a complaint is only made verbally, in an informal manner, or even anonymously. The organisation is committed to taking constructive action based on these complaints. All such complaints should be reported to a Senior Manager who will direct as to appropriate action. In addition, all such complaints will be recorded using the 'Internal Complaints Record' including details of any action taken.
- 4.3 In the recording of complaints, the ethnicity of all complainants will be noted. This information will be collated on an anonymous basis for the purposes of ethnic monitoring.
- 4.4 All records kept will be held in accordance with Data Protection regulations, in relation to timescales, security and storage.

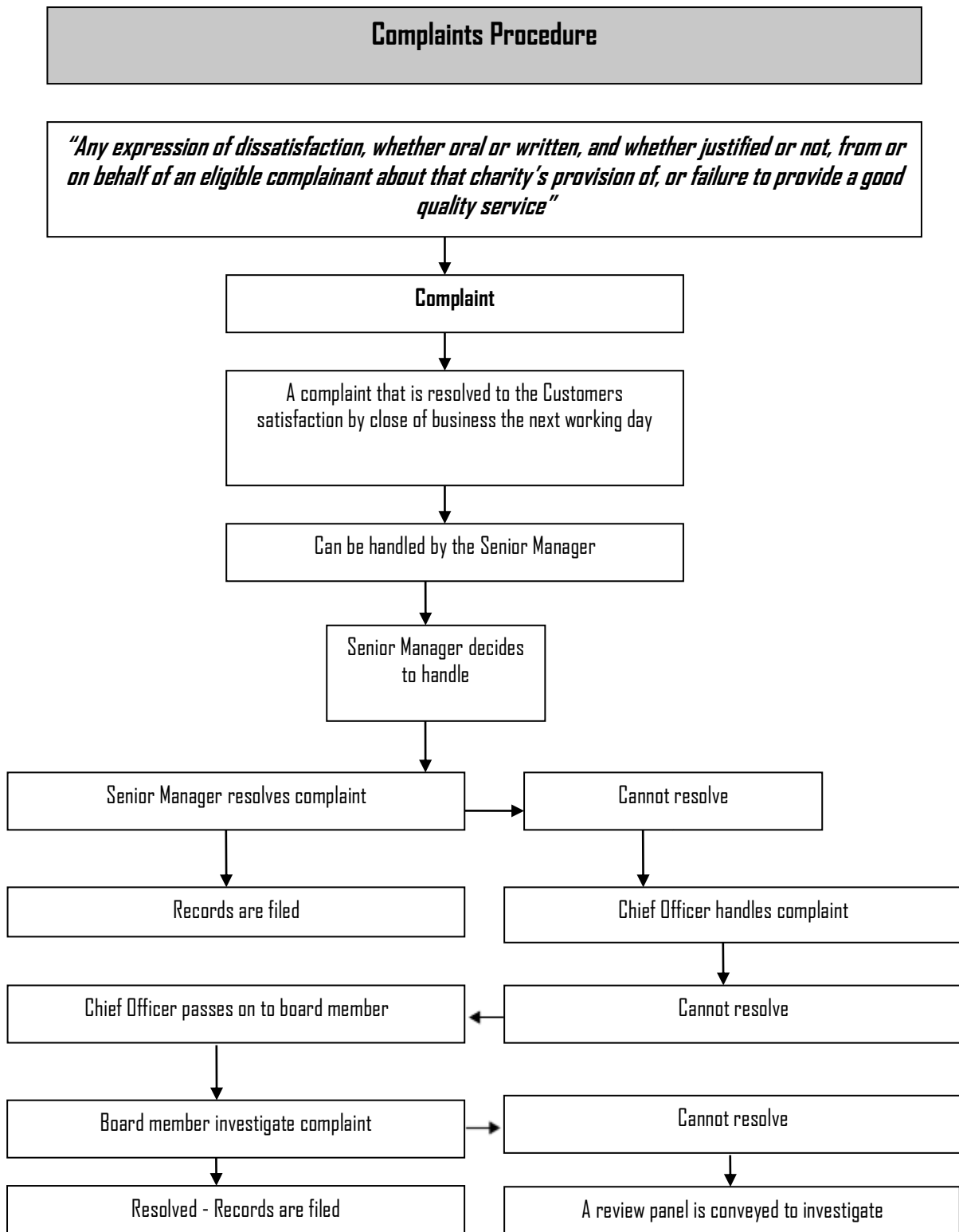
Date of policy issued:

Date of policy review:

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Date of policy review:

Appendix 1



Date of policy issued:

Date of policy review:

APPENDIX 2

RULES

The Complainant

The complainant is the person making the complaint. This may include customers, service users, prospective service users, a prospective employee, or prospective volunteer, a representative of a service user or member of the public.

The Advocate

At each stage of the procedure the complainant may have an advocate to speak and make representation on their behalf.

The Chief Officer

The Chief Officer is responsible for the day to day management of the organisation and is empowered by the Board of Trustees.

The Review Panel

The Review Panel shall consist of the Chairman and two other members of the Board of Trustees.

Date of policy issued:

Date of policy review:

INTERNAL COMPLAINTS RECORD

If a complaint is received please ensure the Complaints Procedure is followed.

This form should be used to record all actions taken and dates of action.

Date of Complaint:

Location Complaint Received:

Name of Complainant:

Age:

Address:

Ethnicity: (Please refer to attached sheet for categories).

Tel No:

Nature of Complaint:

Date of policy issued:

Date of policy review: