

Compliments, Comments & Complaints – Policy and Procedure

Our Vision

We will not give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect. Swindon and Gloucestershire Mind creates services where people are recognised, valued and supported.

Our Mission

Swindon and Gloucestershire Mind provide advice and support to empower anyone in our local communities experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

Our Values

- **Selflessness**
We will act in the best interests of the people we support.
 - **Integrity**
We will be principled in our work.
 - **Objectivity**
We will act and take decisions impartially and fairly, without discrimination or bias.
 - **Accountability**
We will take responsibility for what we do and how we do it.
 - **Openness**
We will work and take decisions in an open and transparent manner.
 - **Honesty**
We will be truthful and reliable.
 - **Leadership**
We will model Swindon & Gloucestershire Minds values and lead by example in demonstrating organisational behaviours.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. We endeavour to deliver the best possible services for those who receive our support. Every person who receives contact from our services should receive compassionate, empathetic, flexible, inclusive, respectful, and timely communication from all staff, trustees and volunteers.
- 1.2. It is important that people understand how they can share compliments, comments and complaints with us. The organisation is committed to make every

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effort to resolve concerns that are raised as soon as possible to give the people being supported/public an outcome that is fair.

- 1.3. Receiving, listening, and responding to feedback as well as being proactive about the development of inclusive and quality services is of great importance to the organisation. In situations where things do not always go as planned or hoped, the organisation drives a culture of learning and improvement rather than blame or retribution.
- 1.4. In accordance with the organisation's vision, mission and values, we actively seek feedback about our services as part of our Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy. Where feedback includes a complaint, the organisation is required to respond to a satisfactory standard and to comply with requirements as outlined within the Mind Quality Mark (MQM).
- 1.5. We aim to actively, seek, listen, respond to and improve through a continuous process of learning from experiences to provide the best quality support where we can.

2. Purpose of the Policy

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any person that receives support from the organisation can share any feedback, compliments, concerns as well as raise any concerns or to make a formal complaint should they wish to do so.
- 2.2 The policy outlines how people can share compliments and comments, as well as what is expected from all staff, trustees and volunteers to resolve matters of concern or formal complaint in a prompt way.
- 2.3 To achieve this, the policy and procedure aims to:
 - Promote a culture within the organisation that welcomes feedback including compliments, comments and any expressions of concern and complaint as an opportunity to engage with the people receiving support from our services and to resolve matters as quickly as possible.
 - Provide a complaint handling and processing system that is fair for complainants and staff alike.
 - Certify that lessons learned from complaints and feedback are used to improve the organisations services.
 - Ensure that all complaint procedures are accessible, open, responsive and transparent to those who employ it.

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3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy and procedure is applicable to all staff, trustees and volunteers employed by the organisation and will be applied to all compliments, comments, concerns or formal complaints received by the organisation. There are no limitations to its circulation within the organisation, it is available to people being supported, families and/or carers, including members of the public via the organisation's website or upon request.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 The **Board of Trustees** provide delegated responsibility to the organisation's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to approve this document.
- 4.2 The **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** is responsible for ensuring that the organisation complies with the policy and procedure.
- 4.3 The **Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** are responsible in the oversight, management and review of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy and procedure. The SLT or above may assign the role of 'Complaint Investigator' to an appropriate member of staff within the organisation.
- 4.4 **Service Managers** are responsible for ensuring the timely, prompt and thorough response of compliments and complaints that arise.
- 4.5 **Complaint Investigators** will undertake and report accurately an objective, preliminary complaint investigation. Pending on the nature of the complaint, mediation or conciliation work may also be required.
- 4.6 All **Staff/Volunteers** are required to be aware of the policy and procedure as they have a responsibility to enable resolution wherever possible. All staff and volunteers have a duty to be selfless, integral, objective, accountable, open, honest and lead by example with the people being supported in accordance with the organisation's values.

5. Policy Statement

5.1 Context

- 5.1.1 The opportunity to share compliments, comments or to raise a concern or make a complaint is an essential right for all those who access services provided by the organisation. Feedback, including complaints can be a valuable way of evaluating and improving our services and of ensuring they are responsive to the needs and preferences of people accessing support.
- 5.1.2 The organisations complaints policy and procedure is intended to be effective and easily understandable. To ensure fairness, any investigation required will be carried out by a Complaint Investigator who was not directly involved with the incident relating to the complaint.
- 5.1.3 The organisation recognises that making a complaint can be difficult for the person making the complaint. Assistance will be offered to the complainant. At any stage, a complainant may seek the help of an independent advocate.
- 5.1.4 A complaint can also be stressful for a person against whom a complaint is made, and that person may also need assistance and support. Any staff or volunteer against whom a complaint is made will be given the fullest opportunity to answer any criticisms.
- 5.1.5 Every effort will be made to try and resolve any problem as soon as possible with the person concerned. If it is necessary to take the matter further, it will be done in line with the procedure described below.
- 5.1.6 Some complaints have or may have financial or legal consequences for the organisation. In such cases its insurers require the organisation to cease direct contact with the complainant. It may then be necessary in the interests of the complainant to refer them to another agency both for assistance with the complaint and to ensure that their service needs are met.
- 5.1.7 The organisation will respect the confidentiality of both the complainant and any person complained about, subject to the provisions of the Confidentiality Policy. This states that, if a complaint is to be properly investigated and action taken because of the complaint, it may not always be possible to avoid a breach of confidentiality. The permission of the complainant will be sought for this but when the welfare of the complainant or other people is seriously at risk it may be necessary to breach confidentiality.
- 5.1.8 The outcome of all complaints and investigations will be reported in confidence to the Board of Trustees and in writing to the complainant. A report on

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Complaints will also be made available to commissioners of the organisation's services as part of the evaluation of these services.

- 5.1.9 The organisation will make efforts to ensure that every person accessing services is aware that this procedure exists.

6. Compliments and Comments Procedure

6.1 Who Can Raise a Comment or Compliment?

6.1.1 A comment/compliment can be made by:

- A person who has or is currently receiving support from the organisation.
- A person who is impacted by, or likely to be impacted by, the action, omission or decision of the organisation.
- Stakeholders, external partners and commissioners can also raise a comment or compliment.

6.1.2. A comment can be defined as: *a remark, observation or criticism that may require immediate action but not does require a full investigation*. A comment is separate to a complaint, but later may end up following the complaint procedure depending on the nature of the comment.

6.1.3. We encourage people to let us know their thoughts on what we could do better, and records of these comments are received and explored by the Management Team and Senior Leadership Team. Comments may be made verbally, or through our feedback forms and evaluation surveys to help us look at what improvements we can make across the organisation and within specific service areas.

6.1.4. It is important for us to know when we are getting things right, and any compliment received is shared with the relevant team as well as the Management Team and Senior Leadership Team.

6.1.5. If the compliment is about an individual staff member, then they are informed in writing by their Line Manager and as best practice we also like to share this with the whole team so we can share good practice and improve services.

6.1.6. Sometimes people accessing our services would like to give a staff member a gift alongside the compliment. Please refer to the Conflict-of-Interest Policy which outlines how to record a gift and the value of a gift that can be accepted by the organisation.

6.1.7. All comments and compliments are recorded by the Management Team to track the number of comments and compliments received per quarter, as well as

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logging any gifts received.

7. Complaints Procedure

7.1 Who Can Raise a Concern/Complaint?

7.1.1 A concern/complaint can be made by:

- A person who has or is currently receiving support from the organisation.
- A person who is impacted by, or likely to be impacted by, the action, omission or decision of the organisation.

7.2. How to Raise a Concern or Complaint

7.2.1. A person may contact a member of staff involved in their support or a member of the management team to express dissatisfaction with an element of the organisation's services.

7.2.2. For a verbal concern/complaint, staff should always attempt to recognise and resolve verbal, informally presented concerns/complaints at the time they are made by the person being supported. If this is not possible, the management team or above must be advised immediately and provided with full details of the concern/complaint to support a resolution.

7.2.3. A concern/complaint may also be received via written communication, i.e., email or letter. Upon receipt of the concern/complaint, the staff member must inform the management team or above and provide them with full details of the concern/complaint to support a resolution.

7.3. Stages of Concerns/Complaints

7.3.1. Stage 1 – Informal Complaint

A member of staff or volunteer will have an informal discussion with the person concerned. The CEO or Senior Leadership Team (SLT) may be asked to help resolve the complaint informally.

7.3.2. Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

A formal complaint should be sent in writing within 28 days of the incident and signed by the complainant. As an alternative, the complainant may use the 'Formal Complaints Form' (Appendix A) if desired and is available upon request. The Complaints Investigator will report the results in writing within 21 days to the complainant and the relevant members of staff.

If the complainant or the person about whom the complaint is made is not satisfied with the results, they can ask for the complaint to be referred to the 3rd stage. The request should be made in writing to the Chair of Board of Trustees.

7.3.3. Stage 3 – Appeal

On receiving the complaint, the Chair of Board of Trustees will decide whether the complaint should proceed to appeal. If they decide it should not, the Chair will write to the complainant explaining why. If they deem that it should, the Chair will set up a panel to consider the complaint.

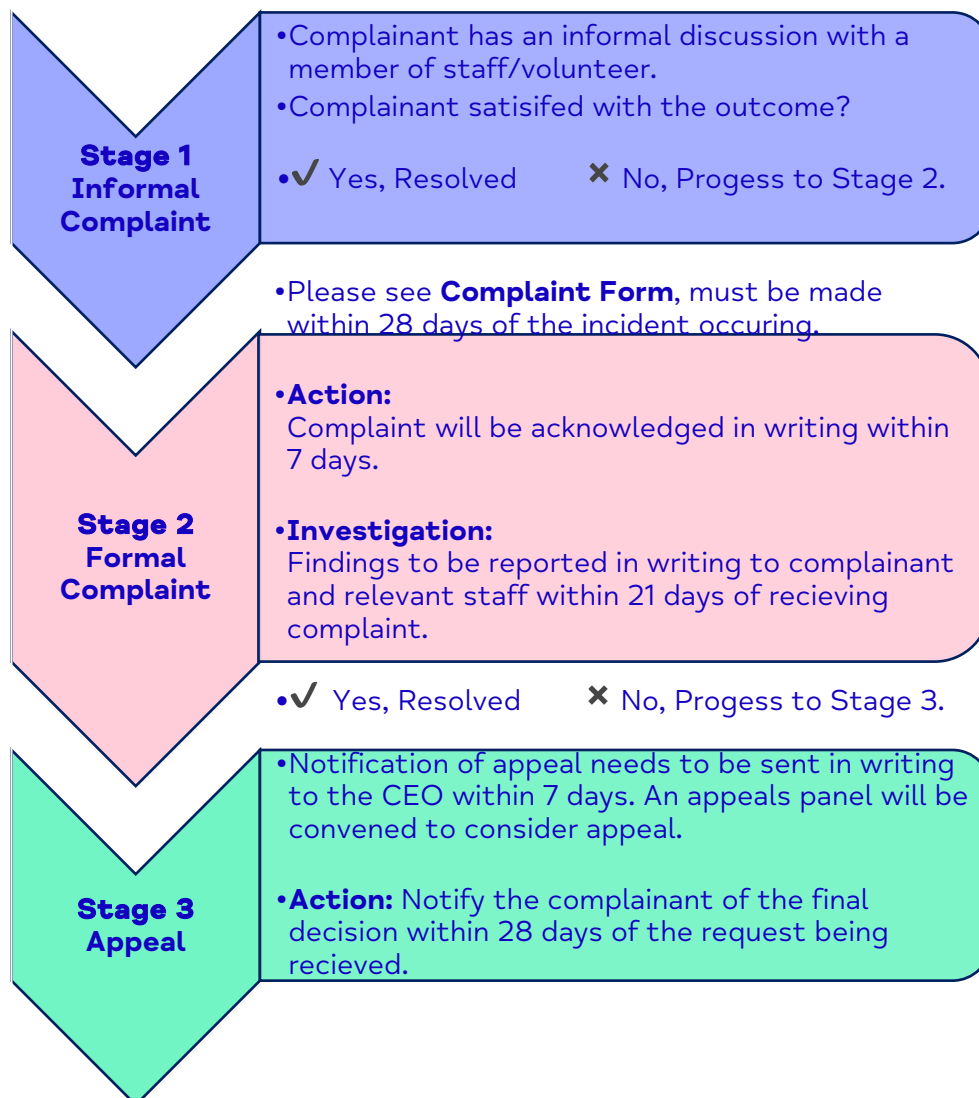
The panel will generally consist of three people, one of whom will be the Chair, and two appropriately qualified members of the Board of Trustees or Staff. The panel will aim to meet within 28 days, although this may take longer in complicated cases.

The panel will invite the complainant and the person or person against whom the complaint has been made (if appropriate) to the meeting. Any such person may be accompanied to the meeting by a friend, supported or independent advocate.

The panel will report their decision and any recommendations in writing to the complainant and to any persons against whom the complaint was made within 21 days. The decision of the panel will be final.

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7.4 Complaints Procedural Flowchart



8. Complaints – Financial or Legal Consequences

- 8.1. The organisation has been advised by its insurers that where a complaint appears likely to result in litigation or financial claim, direct contact with the complainant must cease and all negotiations must be conducted by its insurers.
- 8.2. 8.2 The following fictitious complaints are of the type which may have financial or legal consequences for the organisation:
- A person being supported has lost entitlement to benefit through wrong advice from the organisation.
 - A person being supported claims that they have been hurt by a splinter in piece of furniture.
 - A person being supported has claimed to have suffered food poisoning because of a food being provided by the organisation.
- 8.3. The following types of complaint are unlikely to have legal or financial consequences for the organisation:
- A person being supported complains of rudeness from a member of staff/trustee or volunteer.
 - A person being supported complains of the waiting list being too long before support has been received.
 - A person being supported that they have been excluded from receiving support due to the rules in force.
- If in doubt, contact the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- 8.4. Once it has been established that financial or legal consequences are likely, the Chair of Board of Trustees and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) must be informed. The organisation's insurers must be informed by telephone and then in writing, usually by the CEO. The complainant should be informed in writing that the complaints procedure is suspended and that any future correspondence will be conducted through the insurers.
- 8.5. In the case of welfare benefits where a complainant's position may deteriorate if no action is taken, the complainant must be referred immediately to an appropriate service to provide alternative support.
- 8.6. A full written report of circumstances of the complaint must be prepared and sent to the insurers, usually by the CEO.

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9. Review

- 9.1. This policy will be reviewed annually or when there is a change in service provision or legislation.

Appendices

- **Appendix A – Formal Complaints Form**

Document Control

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Appendix A – Formal Complaints Form

Procedure:

1. Please read the organisation's '*Complaints Policy and Procedure*' before completing this form.
2. This form is to be used for issuing a formal complaint as described in the '*Complaints Policy and Procedure*'. You do not need to complete this form if you are making an informal complaint.
3. If you decide to make a formal complaint, please complete the form below to the best of your ability with particular attention to the event you are complaining about and the outcome you would like. You are welcome to either email or post this to us pending on your preference.
4. If you wish to write a letter instead of completing this form, please provide the same information as requested on this form.

Your Contact Details:

Name:			
Address:			
Telephone (Home):		Telephone (Mobile):	
Email:			

How would you best describe your association with Swindon and Gloucestershire Mind? Please tick one of the below:	
A visitor to the organisation or service premises.	
A person accessing the organisation's support/services.	
A relative or friend of a person accessing the organisation's support/services.	
A professional acting on behalf of a person accessing the organisation's support/services.	

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Your Complaint:

Who or what is your complaint based upon?

Please provide details of your complaint*

including the following details, dates, locations, people involved etc. If you are unable to provide exact dates, it is important to give an approximate timeframe.

**Continue on separate sheet if appropriate.*

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If the complaint being made occurred over 28 days ago, please explain why the complaint was not made during that period.

Witnesses:

If there are any witnesses regarding the completing, please provide their details below (if known):

Name:			
Address:			
Telephone (Home):		Telephone (Mobile):	
Email:			

Desired Outcome:

Please tell us what your desired outcome would be by submitting this complaint.

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Sending your Complaint:

Please send your complaint to the below contact details:

Post: Swindon and Gloucestershire Mind, Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon, SN1 1HE

Email: hr@sgmind.org.uk

In line with the requirements of the Equality Act (2010), we provide reasonable adjustments to support you if you are unable to make your complaint in writing. We can also provide help if English is not your first language. If you need any other assistance, we would be more than happy to help you.

For further help, please contact us via the details below.

Post: Swindon and Gloucestershire Mind, Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon, SN1 1HE

Email: hr@sgmind.org.uk

Tel: 01793 547150

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Separate Sheet: