



17 - Complaints & Comments Policy

Complaints and Comments Policy

Section 1: Aim of Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all feedback received by East Surrey Domestic Abuse Services is dealt with professionally and complaints and concerns are addressed and resolved at the earliest possible stage in a professional and supportive manner.

Section 2: Policy Statement

The organisation welcomes all feedback at any time. This policy is available to all clients, volunteers, external individuals and organisations in receipt of ESDAS services or working in partnership with ESDAS. Any individual should be free to make themselves aware of the procedures and use those procedures without fear of prejudice or judgement.

Section 3: Compliments and Comments

Anyone who wishes to make a compliment, comment or suggestion for improvements can do so by letter, email, phone or in person either on behalf of themselves or someone else.

Section 4: Complaints Procedures

There is a three-stage process in place for management complaints from employees, volunteers and users of the ESDAS' services.

In the event of a complaint, the complainant should make their complaint known as soon as possible but in any event within 6 months of the reason for the complaint occurring.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL COMPLAINT

In the first instance, the concerns or complaint should be made known to the ESDAS member of staff that the complainant is in contact with. This informal complaint can be made verbally or in writing by letter or email. The complainant should be given a copy of this procedure.

That member of staff will try to resolve the matter immediately and informally within five working days but, if this is not possible, the claimant will have the option of making a formal complaint.

STAGE 2 – FORMAL COMPLAINT

If the complainant wants to make a formal complaint, this should be made in writing, by letter or email, and be brought to the attention of a Service / Operations Manager who will undertake a review of the complaint.

(If the complaint is about the Service / Operations Manager, it will be passed to their senior line manager or the CEO).

The complaint should be recorded by the manager dealing with the complaint and include the following details:

- Initial complaint(s).
- Date complaint(s) made.
- Dates of events occurred.
- Person(s) involved.

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days and the aim will be to resolve the complaint within 15 working days. This will include arranging to meet with or speak to the complainant to establish the issue needing resolving and discuss with them possible ways of resolving the problem.

If this target of 15 working days cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the delay, the reason for the delay and the new target day for responding.

The Manager will inform the complainant of the outcome of the complaint and highlight:

- Outline of complaint details
- Action taken
- What actions by whom and when
- Whether or not the complaint was resolved

STAGE 3 – COMPLAINT STILL UNRESOLVED

Where there has not been a satisfactory outcome the complaint will be passed to the CEO or Chair of the Management Committee to progress to stage 3. Within 7 working days of the end of Stage 2, the CEO / Chair of the Management Committee will carry out an investigation into the complaint.

The investigation will evaluate the actions that have been taken so far, identify remaining areas of dissatisfaction, examine further means of resolving the issue.

The investigation will be:

- **Impartial.** Each complaint should be approached with an open mind, and the facts and contentions in support of a complaint should be weighed objectively.
- **Confidential.** A complaint should be investigated in private, and care should be taken when disclosing to others any identifying details of a complaint.
- **Transparent.** A complainant should be told about the steps in the complaint process and be given an opportunity to comment on any information that may be evidence against their complaint.

The CEO / Chair of the Management Committee will also comment on whether procedures and practices have been followed and whether any disciplinary, practice or policy issues arise from the situation.

Following the investigation, a report on the complaint will be completed within 15 working days (unless the complexity of the issue requires a delay in which case the complainant will be informed of this and the new target date for completion of the report).

This report will be put before the Trustees for their review and be signed off by the Chair of Trustees. A letter explaining the outcome of the investigation will be sent to the complainant and this response will be final.

If there is potential or actual legal action arising from a complaint, then the standard complaints procedure set out in this policy may not be applied. This is because an assessment of the potential claim and this policy's procedures may come into conflict. In such cases, appropriate legal advice will be taken and appropriate procedures followed in compliance with such advice.

ESDAS will keep all records of complaints for tracking purposes and to identify any trends in complaints.

Signed: _____ (On behalf of the Trustee Board)

Date: _____ Review date: _____

This policy shall be reviewed every 3 years unless there is a specific need to do so sooner such as a change in legislation.