



Complaint Policy

Version/Revision	Date Effective From	Reviewed	Next Review
V5 Amended Policy	March 2018	SMT Apr 2021	SMT April 2022

NB: Policies will be reviewed earlier than the next review date if there are any changes in legislation that would affect the policy



looking towards a **brighter** future

Complaint Policy

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Purpose

n-compass is committed to providing a quality service. This policy aims to ensure -

- complaints are dealt with in a courteous and efficient manner and are resolved without avoidable delay
- we provide a formal method of challenging decisions we have made
- we can obtain feedback about the quality of our services, enabling us to correct mistakes and use learning to continuously improve the organisation.
- records of complaints are maintained so regular reports can be produced for internal monitoring and public accountability.

Definition

A complaint is...

"An expression of dissatisfaction from a service user (or a relative or friend of a service user), partner or stakeholder who is unhappy with the way n-compass has acted or from a service user perspective they have been adversely affected because of n-compass' action or lack of action in the provision of a service, or an expression of dissatisfaction from a service user (or a relative or friend of a service user) who is adversely affected because of the standard of service provided, whether the service is provided by n-compass itself or a body acting on behalf of n-compass".

Policy

Support/advocacy

Some people are unsure how to go about making a complaint, or how best to put their case. Others may have difficulty with written or spoken English – we will give assistance/support where required. Individuals wishing to make a complaint against n-compass' advocacy service will automatically be offered the support of another advocacy service. n-compass will make relevant documents/information related to the complaints policy available in a range of formats e.g., easy read.

Rights

Complainants have the right:

- to confidentiality (if an investigation cannot proceed without the complainant being identified, the complainant will be given the option whether or not to continue). Anonymous complaints will be investigated at our discretion.
- to be kept informed of the progress of their complaints
- to receive an apology if a complaint is upheld

- to be informed of any changes to our policies or procedures arising from a complaint

Vexatious complaints

n-compass wants to deal fairly and honestly with complainants and ensure that other stakeholders/the overall organisation do not suffer detriment from persons making vexatious complaints. A member of n-compass senior management will write to vexatious complainants to inform them that their behaviour is considered to be unacceptable.

Complaints about contractors

n-compass recognises complaints regarding any organisation contracted to work for n-compass and will seek to resolve such complaints. These complaints are useful to guide learning in future service delivery and contractual arrangements, and feedback on performance is given to contractors on a regular basis. n-compass will forward complaints received in respect of other organisations, with the complainant's permission.

Complaints against staff

If a complaint regarding staff actions or behaviour is found to be valid, then the issue will be referred to the appropriate human resource policy/procedure such as the disciplinary procedure and will be investigated. This will be regarded as an outcome for the complaint's procedure. Where appropriate we will always attempt to mediate between complainants/team members involved in complaints.

Equalities statement

n-compass aims to handle all complaints fairly and honestly regardless of who makes a complaint. n-compass treats all members of the community equitably and will not show bias to any particular individual or group. Those who make a complaint will not suffer detriment as a result.

Reporting

Data/information on complaints received will be reviewed on a monthly basis by the Services Director, and reports will be provided to the Service Leadership Group and The Senior Management Team. Data/information on complaints will also be reported if appropriate to the citizen involvement group.

To demonstrate our commitment to openness, data on complaints received will also be provided within reports to commissioners/funders.

All complaints received from service users will be recorded/updated on the n-compass Case Management System (Charity Log) within 2 working days of being received.

Training/review

The organisation will provide training to review understanding of team members on issues relating to complaints and the contents of this policy in order to ensure that work practices are in line with the requirements of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually and/or in response to significant internal/external drivers.

Responsibility

All n-compass trustees, staff, students, and volunteers are responsible for ensuring they adhere to this policy in practice.

The Lead of each service area is responsible for ensuring their team members are trained in/understand this policy and monitoring that this policy is adhered to in practice within their area of service.

The Lead of each service area who the complaint relates to, or their delegate, is responsible for processing the complaint. The Services Director is responsible for overseeing and reporting on service user complaints received to the organisation. The CEO/Trustees are responsible for complaints against the SMT/Charity.

Service Leads are also required to assess the outcomes of the complaint to determine whether any changes in policies, procedures or working practices are appropriate and to provide reports to the Services Director.

The Senior Management Team is responsible for reviewing monitoring information and the review of this policy.

Service User Complaint Procedure

You can contact us in the way you most prefer -

In writing/face to face	1, Edward VII Quay Navigation Way Preston PR2 2YF
By telephone	01772 280030
Email	admin@n-compass.org.uk

Our Complaints Procedure for service users has three steps -

Step 1 - Resolving the complaint informally

Get in touch with the team member involved, or the appropriate service manager, to discuss your concerns in detail. We almost always find that this approach resolves matters quickly and effectively without the need for any further action through the formal complaint procedure. However, we will always check whether you wish to make a formal complaint at this stage and feed back to you the outcomes of your concern if you wish. We aim to resolve informal complaints at point of contact. If this is not possible, we will provide an informal response within 7 working days.

Step 2 – Making a formal complaint

If you feel your informal complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily or you wish your complaint to be addressed formally you should contact the appropriate service lead and provide the following information:

- what happened;
- who was involved;
- when it happened;
- any evidence you have e.g. copies of letters;
- what you have done to try and resolve the matter so far/the response you received; and
- what you would like us to do

We will make an electronic record of your concerns and write to you within 5 working days to confirm our understanding of the complaint and that we are investigating your complaint. As part of this investigation, we shall contact any team members involved and ask for their views. We shall normally complete the investigation and send you a full response within 14 working days of us receiving your complaint. If it is not possible to respond fully within this time, we will write to let you know, give you the reason for any delay and when we aim to provide a full response. We will write to you to give you the outcome of the investigation. The letter will include:

- whether we have upheld, partly upheld, or not upheld your complaint
- where we have upheld or partly upheld your complaint, what action we are taking to put matters right and to make sure that it does not happen again; and
- what to do if you disagree with our decision

When necessary, e.g., due to communication/capacity issues, we will visit the complainant to give them the outcome.

Where an n-compass team member has been the subject of your complaint, we shall give them a copy of the response.

Where appropriate an independent nominated service user representative will be involved in considering all the information gathered in relation to/shaping the outcome of a formal complaint.

Step 3: Internal review

If you are unhappy with the way we investigated your complaint, or you think that the outcome is unfair, the next step is to ask us to review the way your complaint was dealt with. You should contact the senior manager responsible for the particular service area the complaint relates to within 20 working days of the date of our reply under Step 2 to:

- tell us why you are dissatisfied with the investigation
- provide any supporting evidence and documents; and
- tell us what you would like us to do.

We will make an electronic record of your concerns and write to you within 5 working days to confirm our understanding of the complaint and that we are reviewing your complaint. As part of this review, we will examine whether the complaints procedure was followed correctly. We shall normally complete the review and send you a full response within 14 working days of us receiving your request. If it is not possible to respond fully within this time, we will write to let you know, give you the reason for any delay and when we aim to provide a full response. We will write to you to give you the outcome of the review. The letter will include:

- whether the earlier investigation was thorough, fair and objective;
- whether the review upholds the findings of the investigation or amends or dismisses the investigation outcomes;
- what, if anything, shall be done as a result of the review.

When necessary, e.g., due to communication/capacity issues, we will visit the complainant to give them the outcome.

Where an n-compass team member has been the subject of your complaint, we shall give them a copy of the response.

Where appropriate an independent nominated service user representative will be involved in considering all the information gathered in relation to/shaping the outcome of an internal review.

The decision provided within this review will be final.

If you are still dissatisfied following completion of this procedure, we will encourage you to contact the commissioners of the service involved, where relevant, and provide you with all necessary contact details.

For complaints against the Charity or Senior Management Team

Our Complaints Procedure for complaints against the Charity or SMT has three steps -

Step 1 - Resolving the complaint informally

Get in touch with the CEO, to discuss your concerns in detail. We aim to resolve informal complaints at point of contact. If this is not possible, we will provide an informal response within 7 working days, during which we will maintain contact.

Step 2 – Making a formal complaint

If you feel your informal complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily or you wish your complaint to be addressed formally you should contact the Chairman of the Audit Committee and provide the following information:

- what happened;
- who was involved;
- when it happened;
- any evidence you have e.g. copies of letters;
- what you have done to try and resolve the matter so far/the response you received; and
- what would be a satisfactory outcome to your complaint?

The written formal complaint will be considered at the next Audit Committee meeting (or by a small panel, which will include the Chair of the audit committee plus 1 other audit committee trustees if the timing of the next audit committee meeting is more than one month away from when the complaint was received). The Chairman of the Audit Committee will write to you to give you the outcome of the investigation. The letter will include:

- whether we have upheld, partly upheld or not upheld your complaint
- where we have upheld or partly upheld your complaint, what action we are taking to put matters right and to make sure that it does not happen again; and
- what to do if you disagree with our decision

Where an n-compass team member has been the subject of your complaint, we shall give them a copy of the response.

Step 3: Internal review

If you are unhappy with the way we investigated your complaint, or you think that the outcome is unfair, the next step is to ask us to review the way your complaint was dealt with. You should contact the Chairman of the Board within 20 working days of the date of our reply under Step 2 to:

- tell us why you are dissatisfied with the investigation
- provide any supporting evidence and documents; and
- What would be a satisfactory outcome to your complaint

As part of this review we will examine whether the complaints procedure was followed correctly. Your response will be considered at the next Board of Trustees meeting (or by a small panel of Trustees, which will include the Chairman and 2 other Board Trustees, if the timing of the Board meetings is more than one month away from when the complaint was received). Following that meeting the Chairman of the Board will write to you to give you the outcome of the review. The letter will include:

- whether the earlier investigation was thorough, fair and objective;
- whether the review upholds the findings of the investigation or amends or dismisses the investigation outcomes;
- what, if anything, shall be done as a result of the review.

Where an n-compass team member has been the subject of your complaint, we shall give them a copy of the response.

The decision provided within this review will be final.

If you are still dissatisfied following completion of this procedure, we will encourage you to contact the commissioners of the service involved, where relevant, and provide you with all necessary contact details.

Equality Impact Assessment Form

Name/ Job Title of Assessor	Luan Mann – People Services Manager
Policy Assessed – Complaints	Date Assessed: 12/02/2021

		Yes/ No	Comments
1.	Does the policy, function, service or project affect one group more or less favourably than another on the basis of:		
	• Race & Ethnic Background	No	
	• Gender including transgender	No	
	• Disability	No	
	• Religion or belief	No	
	• Sexual orientation	No	
	• Age	No	
2.	Does the public have a perception/concern regarding the potential for discrimination?	No	The forms are for internal staff only

If the answer to any of the questions above is yes, please complete a full stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment

Signature of assessor:



Date: 12/02/2021

