



# Service User Complaints

## What is a complaint?

**A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, either written or spoken.**

**A complaint against Solent Mind is any situation in which we have some responsibility and the individual is not satisfied and wants to take it further.**

The following principles are used in Solent Mind's complaints policy:

- We recognise that compliments and complaints are an important part of customer feedback.
- The procedure is fair and accessible to all people using services or experiencing our work, and to our workforce, regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, belief or sexual orientation.
- Making a complaint will not harm or prejudice the service that is given to the complainant.
- Complainants receive a timely and appropriate response, identifying the outcome of any investigation, wherever possible.
- Action is taken where necessary in the light of the outcome of the complaint and learning from complaints will be used to improve our work.
- If the complainant is not happy with the result of the response to a complaint they will usually have the right to appeal.

## Who can make a complaint?

A complaint may be made by the person who is directly affected by the action or inaction of Solent Mind, such as a service user, fundraiser, supporter or member. A complaint may be made by a person acting on behalf of someone else, only where:

- The person in question has died and the individual is a demonstrable personal representative.
- The person is a child under the age of 18, where the complaint is in the best interests of the child and is made by a formal representative of the child.
- The person has physical or mental incapacity and the complainant is a formal representative in the area relating to the topic of the complaint (such as an RPR).
- The person has given recorded third party consent, in writing or demonstrably, such as to a family member, friend, advocate or delegated authority.

## Why can't I make complaints anonymously?

A complaint cannot be made anonymously as we would be unable to investigate it, however we do accept and appreciate anonymous feedback (positive and negative) via our website [yourviews@solentmind.org.uk](mailto:yourviews@solentmind.org.uk) contact form, though we cannot respond to or investigate any information provided anonymously.

Anyone using the procedure will get help if they want it, to use the advocacy service of their choice where possible.

## How to get in touch with the Complaints Team

[complaints@solentmind.org.uk](mailto:complaints@solentmind.org.uk) 02382 027828

Complaints Team, 15-16 The Avenue, Southampton, Hampshire, SO17 1XF

For data related complaints (GDPR), you can also contact our Data Protection Officer

[DPO@solentmind.org.uk](mailto:DPO@solentmind.org.uk)

Data Protection Officer, 15-16 The Avenue, Southampton, Hampshire, SO17 1XF

**Privacy note:** There may be circumstances in which information disclosure is in the best interests of the individual, or the protection, safety or wellbeing of a child or vulnerable adult. In these circumstances, a complaint will be escalated as necessary with advice from Solent Mind's Safeguarding Leads, Caldicott Guardians and Data Protection Officer as appropriate.

## Your guide to the complaints process

### 1. You notice an issue or problem.

If you think something has gone wrong, you can contact us and we will try to put things right. The sooner we know about an issue, the quicker we can try to resolve it. We can look into an issue for you up to three months after it happened. We take all learning from complaints and comments seriously and appreciate the time you took to raise a concern. You will not be refused a service because you have previously raised a complaint or are currently raising one.

You can contact us by email, phone or post – if you speak to us by phone we'll follow up with an email to make sure we've got the details we discussed with you correct.

### 2. Local resolution

Once you've told us about the issue, an appropriate person (usually the Head of Service) will look into the issue and speak to you, either by email, post or phone to try to resolve your complaint and let you know of any actions that will be taken. This usually takes up to 10 working days.

We may need to ask you for more information to help us understand and resolve the issue, in which case we will let you know if it may take longer.

### 3. Formal complaint registration

If you've received a response to try to informally resolve your complaint and you are dissatisfied with it, you can ask to formally register your complaint within one month of the response.

To formally register your complaint, you can contact us at [complaints@solentmind.org.uk](mailto:complaints@solentmind.org.uk), tel: 02382 027828 or write to Complaints Team, 15-16 The Avenue, Southampton, Hampshire, SO17 1XF, or speak to the person who dealt with your complaint locally.

If you email the complaints team, we will usually reply within 3 working days to let you know who will be investigating your complaint and what happens next. A suitable senior member of staff will investigate your complaint within 15 working days and you will receive a formal written response.

### 4. Appeals

Complaint outcomes can be appealed within 10 working days of response on the grounds that:

- More evidence has come to light after the investigation which may change the outcome – for example, a recording or letter.
- The investigation process was flawed or completed incorrectly.

Complaints about a lack of service provision due to funding restrictions or commissioner set criteria cannot be appealed as this is outside of our control.

If you would like to appeal your complaint, please contact our complaints team. A senior member of staff who was not involved in the investigation will check if your complaint is suitable for appeal and let you know the outcome. If your complaint is not suitable for appeal, we may direct you to other services or avenues for discussion where appropriate.

If your complaint is suitable for review, this will usually be carried out within 20 working days by a panel of trustees and you will receive a formal outcome letter. After this, if you are not satisfied, you may still be able to take the complaint up with the Service funder e.g. Adult Services, or the Care Quality Commission.

If you are dissatisfied with our complaints process, you can contact the Charity Commission, who will be able to advise on whether they may be able to assist:

[http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About\\_us/Contacting\\_us/default.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About_us/Contacting_us/default.aspx)

