

Comments and Complaints

1. Statement of Policy

- 1.1 This policy is intended for use by anyone who has interaction with Healthwatch Bexley (HWB) as a service
- 1.2 Quality of service is an important measure of an organisation's effectiveness and HWB welcomes feedback and ideas as to how we might do things better.
- 1.3 HWB is committed to the continuous improvement of its services and will actively encourage comments from service users, including telling us when we get things wrong.
- 1.4 HWB encourages everyone to deal with concerns directly and in a timely manner to avoid difficulties escalating. We will make our comments and complaints policy and procedure available to anyone that wants it.

2. Standards for handling complaints

- 2.1 HWB treats as a complaint any expression of dissatisfaction with our service that calls for a response. We will listen to complaints, treat them seriously and sensitively, and learn from them.
- 2.2 Service users will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times. We also expect that they will be courteous and fair in dealings with our staff at all times.
- 2.3 Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information will be handled and shared on a need to

know basis only. Information must be stored in a secure place with access to designated people only, in line with data protection.

- 2.4 We will deal with complaints promptly in line with the procedure and timescales below.

3. Complaints procedure

Informal resolution

- 3.1 In the first instance, HWB will seek to resolve any dissatisfaction informally. We encourage service users to raise concerns with an appropriate member of staff with a view to resolving misunderstandings and/or differences of opinion as simply and quickly as possible. A record of the issue and outcome should be made by the member of staff and passed to the Manager or the CEO at MIND in Bexley as the senior responsible officer for HWB.

Formal process

- 3.2 If informal resolution is not possible, the complaint should be made in writing (by email or letter) to the Manager or CEO at MIND in Bexley using the contact details at the end of this document. An appropriate advocate may be used where necessary. The complainant should provide as much clear detail as possible, including any relevant documents and correspondence.
- 3.3 A complainant who is still dissatisfied may seek a review of the complaint by the HWB Advisory Board's Chair, who may seek the involvement of other members of the Advisory Board in carrying out an investigation. The decision of the Chair will be final.

Timeframe

- 3.4 Concerns will be dealt with as promptly as possible. Complaints will be acknowledged in writing or by phone within three working days and we will aim to resolve the complaint within ten working days.

- 3.5 It may be necessary to extend the time limit, for example, the matter is complex or all relevant parties are not available to enable investigation to proceed. In this case HWB will keep the complainant informed of progress, the reasons for the delay, and the date by which a response is expected.
- 3.6 Following any stage of the procedure, a complainant has a maximum of 28 days from the date of the response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.

4. Remedies

- 4.1 All complaints and the action taken will be logged to enable monitoring of the types of problems that arise, the best way to sort them out and how to improve service delivery.
- 4.2 When we get things wrong we will act to:
- Accept responsibility
 - Explain what went wrong and why, and
 - Put things right by making any changes required (e.g staff training).

Serious complaints

- 4.3 If a complaint against a staff member is upheld, the organization employing the member of staff may invoke the disciplinary procedure. This is an internal decision relevant to the organization concerned only.
- 4.4 Managers should immediately inform the CEO of any serious complaints such as harassment, and the CEO will immediately inform the Chair so that appropriate action can be taken

Address for Correspondence:

Healthwatch Bexley, 2A Devonshire Road, Bexleyheath Kent DA6 8DS