

COMMENDATIONS, COMMENTS, AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

PURPOSE:

To outline Changing Pathways (CP) approach to receiving comments, commendations and complaints (CCC) from service users and other stakeholders and detail the procedures that must be followed by all employees when receiving a CCC about an incident or issue relating to CP services, employees, volunteers or buildings.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all CP employees, placement students, volunteers, service users and visitors.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

- Have Your Say Leaflet
- House Meeting Minutes Template
- Resident Complaints Form

VERSION CONTROL

| Version | Date | Author | Rationale |
|---------|----------------|------------------------|--|
| 1 | January 2017 | Philippa Ladd – CEO | First Publication |
| 2 | February 2018 | Philippa Ladd | Annual Review |
| 3 | September 2018 | Philippa Ladd | Review to align policy with Thurrock ITT |
| 4 | February 2021 | Kelly Mackenzie – IDVA | Annual Review – Version Control and Contents page added, format changes made and changes to content. |

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| 5 | March 2022 | Annabelle Gardner – Brighter Futures DAP | Annual Review – minor changes made and various contact details updated |
| 6 | March 2024 | Gemma Faraway Operations Manager | Review Minor changes made |

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PART ONE – POLICY STATEMENT

1.0 Aims and Principles

1.1 CP is committed to encouraging our service users and stakeholders to tell us what they think about the service CP provides, whether good or bad. CP aims to make this process as accessible as possible ensuring that everyone is able to give feedback whatever their personal circumstances.

1.2 To engage with all service users and stakeholders, CP will ensure that there are a variety of communication channels in which they can make a CCC both formally and informally. CP is committed to ensure that no service user will be disadvantaged in making a CCC so support will be provided to service users who wish to feedback on CP's service. No service user will be treated more or less favourably as a result of making a CCC.

1.3 CP monitors all CCCs and has clear processes for communicating feedback to all staff members where appropriate.

1.4 Please note CP reserve the right not to investigate a complaint if this is made by someone who is alleged to be a perpetrator of abuse or violence.

PART TWO – PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

2.0 Methods for Giving Feedback

2.1 CP aims to make communicating feedback as accessible as possible for all service users whether in refuge or outreach services. Feedback can be provided in a variety of ways including:

- Completing the 'Have your Say' leaflet
- Key Working sessions in the refuge

- Verbally with case practitioner or manager
- House Meetings and arranged coffee mornings in the refuge
- Formal written letter
- Consultation/Service User Involvement events
- Focus groups for service users and previous service users
- Focus groups for staff members
- Feedback/evaluation forms for groups and courses
- Feedback form in Oasis, completed at the end of a programme of support or before a case is closed, with the help of a case practitioner
- Email welcome@changingpathways.org

2.2 Complaint incidents should have occurred within the previous 6 months to enable CP to investigate and provide a formal response.

2.3 All new service users are to be given a copy of the ‘Have Your Say’ leaflet and an explanation given on how feedback can be given as part of their induction into service.

3.0 Focus Groups

3.1 CP facilitates focus groups with a small number of current and previous service users who have lived experience of domestic abuse.

3.2 Each focus group is a space to welcome discussion and feedback to explore a variety of different issues. This includes testing solutions, exploring perspectives on issues concerning domestic abuse, generating ideas on best practice, and ways in which CP can improve support for service users.

3.3 Each focus group is overseen by a moderator who facilitates and manages discussion.

3.4 Focus groups are centred on generating insight and feedback through guided discussion with current and previous service users. Focus groups are a space for those involved to share their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives upon a particular subject.

3.5 The results from Focus Groups are monitored and reviewed; outcome records are kept. The data gathered is used to inform and improve current practice.

3.6 Focus groups are used to generate the following outcomes:

- bring any issues to the fore within a safe and co-productive space
- gather information about a particular issue raised
- gather a diverse range of opinions
- generate and test ideas
- stimulate new ideas and encourage participant-led solutions
- identify barriers or problems to accessing services offered
- gather service users' impression of a service.

4.0 Support for Providing Feedback

4.1 Service users may request help to make feedback about the service/experience they are receiving from CP. They could, for example, ask a CP staff member or a worker from another organisation. Their chosen person could act as an advocate for the service user and provide support in writing a letter of complaint, making a verbal complaint, or attending any meetings and speaking on the service user's behalf.

5.0 Feedback from Changing Pathways

5.1 CP aims to work in a transparent manner and as part of that transparency, CP will provide feedback informing the service user or stakeholder what has been done as a result of their CCC. For instance, a team manager could congratulate a staff member at a team meeting for receiving a commendation from a service user or highlighting where CP has made changes to their practice as a result of a comment. This feedback could take many different forms depending on what is appropriate, such as a letter, verbally, or in a display in one of our refuges.

6.0 Receiving Commendations, Comments, and Complaints (CCC)

6.1 Upon receipt of a CCC, employees should forward this to the Operations Manager for that area who will advise the employee on the appropriate course of action. It may be something that can be dealt with by the employee who received the CCC or it may need intervention by a member of the senior leadership team (SLT).

6.2 In the event of the absence of the Operations Manager for that area, all CCCs should be forwarded to a member of the SLT to assess the appropriate course of action.

6.3 Employees will be informed of the course of action that they need to take to respond to the CCC. All employees will be expected to follow the course of action and provide all feedback and documents related to the matter to the Operations Manager for that area in a timely manner.

6.4 There is a mechanism for dealing with complaints from children, advertised on posters in Thurrock and Basildon refuge

7.0 Recording and Monitoring of Commendations, Comments and Complaints

7.1 All CCCs need to be recorded on the CCC database.

7.2 The database is password protected and includes the following details:

- name of the person making the CCC
- address of the person making the CCC
- details of the CCC
- outcomes as a result of the CCC
- feedback provided by staff
- further actions required

7.3 The Operations Manager for that area will provide a summary for the monthly SLT meetings of the CCC received during the month. This close monitoring will enable the SLT to identify patterns and problems occurring in the organisation and use this information to develop our practice, annual business plan and make amendments to our services.

7.4 A report will be submitted to the Board of Trustees on a 6 monthly basis providing feedback and service improvements made as a result of feedback.

8.0 Formal Complaint Process

8.1 Where a staff member receives a complaint about CP practice, buildings or another staff member, the following process must be followed:

9.0 Stage One

9.1 When a service user or stakeholder makes a complaint, they should be asked if they would like to put in writing if they have not already done so. Assistance should be provided by staff if the service user requests this. The employee who receives the complaint must pass the complaint onto the Operations Manager for that area who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days. The Operations Manager for that area will allocate the complaint to a member of the SLT.

9.2 The complaint must be thoroughly investigated by the assigned lead and a response provided in writing to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation within a further 15 working days.

9.3 In general, complaints will not be investigated by the Chief Executive Officer in Stage One to enable a Stage Two appeal route.

10.0 Stage Two

10.1 If the service user or stakeholder is not satisfied with the outcome of the response they have received in Stage One, they can take their complaint further to CP's CEO or, in the absence of the CEO, to the Board of Trustees.

10.2 In Stage Two, the complaint must be put in writing and again assistance should be provided to help the service user complete this if necessary. The envelope containing the letter of complaint must be marked 'CONFIDENTIAL STAGE TWO COMPLAINT' and sent to:

CEO
Changing Pathways
PO Box 51
Basildon
SS14 0ND

10.3 Stage Two letters must be forwarded to the CEO on the same day and the CEO will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days. The CEO will then investigate the complaint and respond with the outcome of the investigation within a further 28 working days. The CEO will request information from the Senior Manager who initially investigated the complaint to assist with their investigation including:

- What the issue(s) is/are
- What actions have been taken to resolve the problem
- Why the service user/stakeholder remains unsatisfied
- What the service user would consider a satisfactory resolution to their complaint

10.4 In line with the requirements of Thurrock Council's Refuge Contract, the Contract Manager for this service will be notified of complaints that reach Stage Two of the complaint's procedure.

11.0 Stage Three

11.1 Should the service user or stakeholder remain dissatisfied following the response from the CEO, the CEO should inform the Board of Trustees and keep them aware of any results. The service user or stakeholder may make a further complaint to the following:

- If the complaint relates to the support received in a Thurrock commissioned service, the service user may contact Thurrock Council's Complaint Department

Statutory Complaints Manager, Adult Social Care
Thurrock Council
Civic Offices
New Road Grays
RM17 6SL
01375 652246 OR 01375 652355
complaints@thurrock.gov.uk

- If the complaint relates to the support received in an Essex County Council commissioned service, the service user may contact Essex County Council's Complaints Department via an online form sent to comments, compliments and complaints:

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/complaints> or by sending a letter to:
Compliance and Complaints
Customer Services
Essex County Council
PO Box 11, County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1QH

- If the complaint relates to the support received from Basildon Council funded work, the service user may contact Basildon Council's Complaint Department. This can be done via telephone 01268 206650 or via an online form sent to comments, compliments and complaints:

<https://www5.basildon.gov.uk/forms/commentscomplaints> or via email
comments@basildon.gov.uk or by sending a letter to:

The Basildon Centre
St Martin's Square
Basildon
Essex SS14 1DL

- Where the complaint pertains to accommodation in terms of landlord duties, if the service user or stakeholder remains dissatisfied with the internal processes, they can pursue the complaint with the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman must be contacted within 12 months of the raising of the original complaint either by telephone on 0300 111 3000, via email to info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk or writing to the following address,

The Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L337WQ

12.0 Using Feedback

12.1 All the feedback received regarding the organisation and individuals shall be used positively to inform the organisation's practice, response, and service offer.

12.2 Where positive feedback is given in relation to an individual employee, the employee will be recognised amongst their peers either through a mention in the team meeting or via email.

REVIEW SCHEDULE

This policy is subject to annual review or when significant changes occur

| Date | Author | Board Approval | Next Review Date |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| January 2017 | Philippa Ladd | Unknown | January 2018 |
| February 2018 | Philippa Ladd | February 2018 | February 2019 |

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| September 2018 | Philippa Ladd | September 2018 | September 2019 |
| February 2021 | Kelly Mackenzie | March 2021 | February 2022 |
| March 2022 | Annabelle Gardner | March 2022 | March 2023 |