
Comments Complaints & Compliments Policy

*SER Family Support
Network*

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29/09/2024

1.Responsibility for approval of policy	<i>Board, management committee</i>
2.Responsibility for implementation	<i>Management Committee & Staff member</i>
3.Responsibility for ensuring review	<i>Staff role</i>

1. Policy Statement

1.1 The SER Family Support Network is committed to ensuring that feedback; comments, compliments and complaints from those using its services are acknowledged, reviewed, acted upon and responded to and that the learning derived from this feedback informs our quality improvement programmes. Effective handling of service user feedback is fundamental to the provision of a quality service. Best practice identifies what service users want when they provide feedback and the SER Family Support Network has used this information to develop a system which will meet these requirements.

1.2 The SER Family Support Network believes that if an individual wish to make a comment, compliment, complaint or register a concern, they should find it easy to do so.

2. Purpose

2.1 This policy is intended to ensure that comments, compliments and complaint complaints are dealt with properly and that all complaints, compliments or comments are taken seriously and addressed in a professional manner.

3. Scope

3.1 This Policy relates to the handling of feedback provided by service users and stakeholders. Concerned individuals can include: service users, members of the local community and concerned stakeholders (funders, external agencies, etc.).

3.2 A complaint by a member of staff is addressed through the grievance process (see Grievance Policy).

3.3 Complaints can be made against any aspect of the SER Family Support Network. While all complaints need to be addressed, this policy is mainly concerned with complaints for which the involvement of management would be necessary.

4. Principles

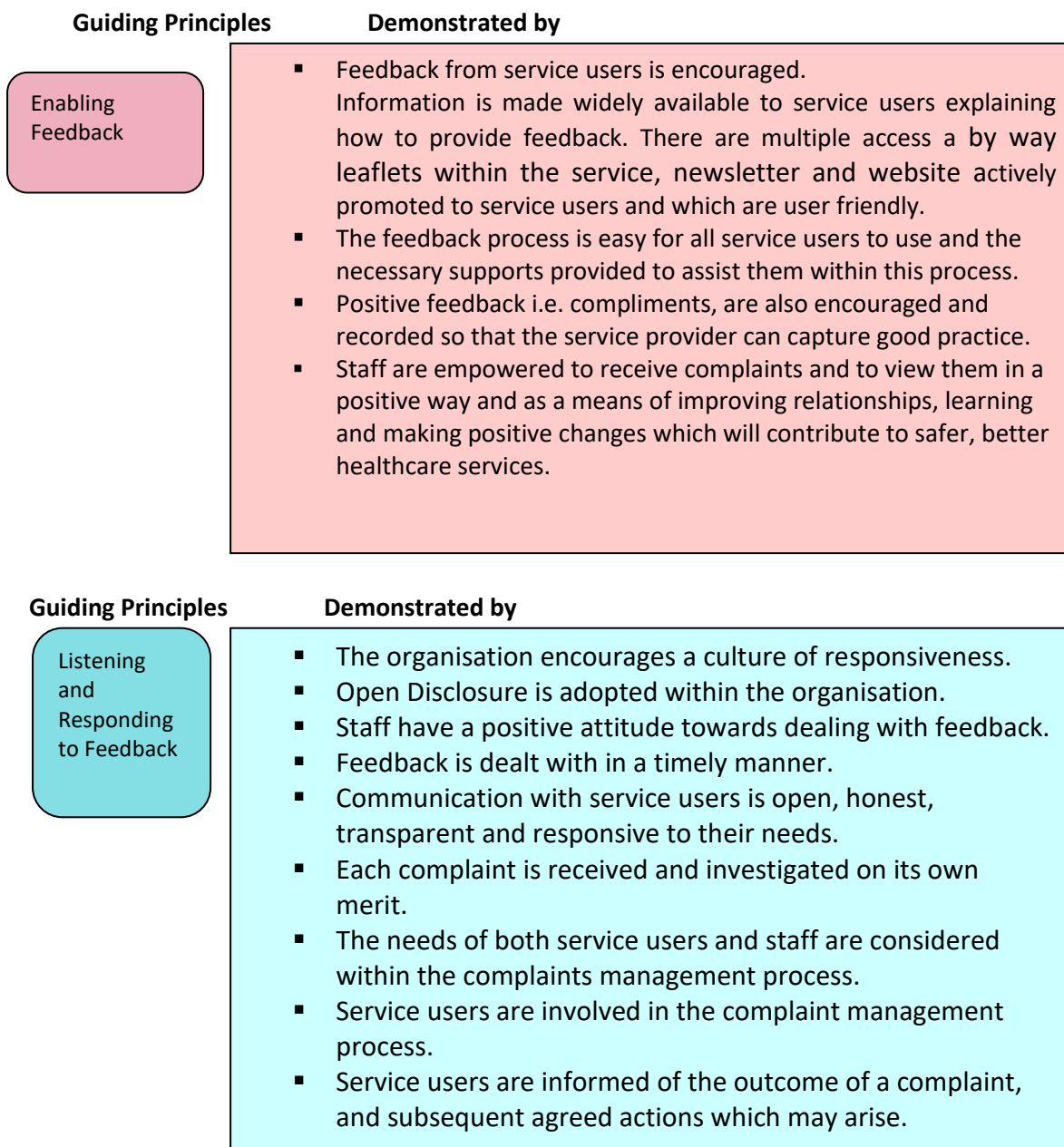
4.1 Feedback will be guided and managed by five key principles as follows:

- Enabling feedback
- Listening and Responding to feedback
- Supporting service users
- Supporting staff
- Learning, improvement and accountability

The implementation of these five principles will create a culture where feedback is encouraged and allows for service users to make positive comments as well as complaints. This organisation supports the concept that most complaints, if dealt with early, openly and honestly, can be sorted out at a local level between just the complainant and the organisation.

These principles are incorporated as a core component of service delivery and the following figure (Figure 1) reflects how these principles work in practice

Figure 1: The five principles governing the SER Family Support Network management of service user feedback



Guiding Principles

Demonstrated by

Supporting
Staff

- A clear process for managing feedback is communicated to staff.
- Staff are trained in complaints handling and able to deal with complaints at the first point of contact.
- Staff are supported throughout the complaints management process.
- Staff are treated with dignity and respect, compassion and empathy.
- Staff are afforded the right of reply.
- The practical, professional, psychological, emotional and social needs of staff involved in or affected by feedback are identified and addressed.

Guiding Principles

Demonstrated by

Learning,
Improvement
and
Accountability

- Staff responsible for investigating and resolving complaints are trained in complaints handling.
- Information from feedback including complaints are regularly reported to the Management Committee
- Lessons learned from complaints are used for system wide learning and improvements.
- Findings from complaints are regularly communicated to staff and management committee. Recommendations made and accepted following the investigation of complaints are implemented fully and all relevant persons have been informed of this.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Management are responsible for;

5.1.2 Ensuring all staff is aware of the provisions of, and procedures included in this policy and are able to advise service users on same.

5.2 All complaints received are handled in line with the provisions of this policy.

5.2.1 Regularly monitoring the number, nature and outcome of complaints as part of the continuous quality improvement process.

5.3 Staff are responsible for;

5.3.1 Ensuring that all service users are informed of the complaints policy.

5.3.2 Assisting service users to make a complaint as outlined in this policy when requested to do so.

5.3.3 Following all other steps regarding complaints as outlined in this policy.

6. Service User and Concerned Individuals Complaints Procedures Who can complain?

6.1 Anyone who is a user of the service.

6.1.2 An advocate may also complain on the service user's behalf provided they have the service user's written consent.

6.2 What can they complain about? (This is not an exhaustive list)

6.2.1 A service user can complain about:

- 6...1. Any part of the service that they have received
- 6...2. A decision made about them that affects them
- 6...3. Being denied a service
- 6...4. A change in service provision
- 6...5. A member of staff

6.3 Acknowledgment of complaints

All complainants will receive notification, in writing, that their complaint has been received within 5 working days. This notification must outline the steps to Acknowledgment of complaints. All complainants will receive notification, in writing, that their complaint has been received within 5 working days. This notification must outline the steps to be taken in the investigation and the timeframe for completion of the investigation.

6.4 Complaints involving staff

6.4.1 If the complaint is about a member of staff, the complainant should immediately be referred to the chairperson. The service user will be supported to write the complaint. The Service user will be told that the staff member will be informed that a complaint has been lodged against them.

6.4.2 If the complaint is about a director, the service user will be supported to write the complaint, which will be referred to a more senior person. The service user will be told that the director will be informed that a complaint has been lodged against them.

6.5 Verbal complaints

- 6.5.1 All verbal complaints, no matter how seemingly unimportant, will be taken seriously. Staff will ensure to retain an open, non-defensive attitude.
- 6.5.2 All contact with the complainant should be polite, courteous and empathetic. At all times staff should remain calm and respectful.
- 6.5.3 A staff person who receives an oral complaint should seek to solve the problem immediately if possible. If staff cannot solve the problem immediately, they should offer to get the manager to deal with the problem.
- 6.5.4 If the suggested plan of action is not acceptable to the complainant, then the member of staff should ask the complainant to complete a Complaints Record Form (Appendix I) and inform them fully about the complaints procedure.
- 6.5.5 If a complaint is made regarding a staff person, the complaint will be dealt with as described in 5.3

6.6 Written complaints

- 6.6.1 All complaints that need management to resolve them should be lodged in writing.
- 6.6.2 A completed copy of the Complaints Record Form should be given to the chairperson. This should include information on the following:
 - 6.6.2.1 The nature of the complaint.
 - 6.6.2.2 Why the original response to the complaint was unsatisfactory, if there was one.
 - 6.6.2.3 What the complainant's desired outcome would be.
- 6.6.3 The chairperson will proceed to investigate the complaint. If necessary, further details may be requested from the complainant. If the complaint is not made by the service user but on the service user's behalf, then the consent of the service user, preferably in writing, must be obtained from the complainant.
- 6.6.4 Where a complaint involves two or more individuals, all parties will have the opportunity to give their side of events to the manager/senior officer (who will choose whether those involved should meet together or should be meet separately).
- 6.6.5 If the complaint involves a member of staff they will be requested to attend to discuss the issues. They will be given reasonable notification which enables them time to organise to bring a colleague or trade union representative with them if they wish to.

- 6.6.6 The chairperson will complete the investigation within **ten days** (unless otherwise agreed) and the complainant will be informed of any outcomes in writing and verbally.
- 6.6.7 If the complaint involves potentially serious matters, advice should be sought from a legal advisor. If legal action is taken at this stage, any investigation by the organisation under the complaint's procedure should cease immediately.

6. Outcomes and Actions

- 6.1 Outcomes and actions initiated as a result of the complaint should be recorded on the Complaints Recording Form.
- 6.2 If the complainant is found to be rightly aggrieved, an apology should be offered by the organisation in writing signed by the chairperson and all steps should be taken to ensure the cause is appropriately addressed.
- 6.3 If the service user is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, a meeting should be set up with the chairperson within four weeks. The complainant will be entitled to bring a family member or an advocate. The outcome of this meeting will be communicated in writing within 3 working days
- 6.4 If the complainant's proposed outcome is not judged satisfactory by the organisation, the complainant will be provided with a written rationale for the decision.
- 6.5 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation they have a right to appeal, though this should be done within ten working days from receipt of official correspondence.
- 6.6 The chairperson must then contact the board / management committee to instigate the establishment of an appeal committee and process
- 6.7 The appeal should involve two members of the management committee who have not previously been involved in the process.
- 6.8 The decision of this committee is final
- 6.9 Internal reviews: If a complainant is dissatisfied with the recommendation made or steps taken with regard to their complaint then they may refer their complaint for SER Family Support network review. All reviews should be addressed to SER Family Support Network, Millennium Centre, Church Road, Lisduff, Waterford
- 6.10 Independent review: If a complainant is dissatisfied by the recommendation made by the National Family Support Network review then they may refer their complaint to the Ombudsman. The office of the ombudsman can be contacted at: Office of the Ombudsman, 18 Lr. Leeson Street, Dublin 2. Tel: +353-1-639 5600

7. Anonymous Complaints

- 7.1. Anonymous complaints or complaints made under false names raise both practical problems and issues concerning fairness. The reason for this is that an investigation can not be undertaken. Of importance is the fact that a staff member cannot properly respond to the issues raised. The chairperson will also not be in position to undertake any remedial actions where there is not a full agreement on the issue as described in the complaint.
- 7.2. In the event that an anonymous complaint is received the SER Family Support Network will note the issues raised and, where necessary try and resolve them appropriately. An anonymous complaint may be referred for investigation:
 - 7.2.1. If there was good reason why the complaint was being made on an anonymous basis, for example, if there was a concern by the complainant that if their identity was revealed it could lead to negative consequence on their health or well-being. This may depend on the seriousness of the allegation being made, and should be at the discretion of the manager. If the allegation involves the manager, it should be referred to the chair of the management committee.
 - 7.2.2. If the allegation can be properly investigated either by talking to a third party witness, or with evidence provided with the complaint, and where there is no need for further contact with the anonymous complainant.
 - 7.2.3. Any complaint involving a minor will be investigated and handled in a confidential manner according to the Child Protection Policy.
- 7.3. In the case that a complaint can not be fully investigated, the complaint will not be referred to in the staff file or will not in any other way impact upon working process or roles etc, except where this has been agreed by all involved including the person named in the complaint.
- 7.4. If the complaint relates to the general service delivery this will be referred to the management committee and remedial action will be implemented if appropriate.
- 7.5. A record of all complaints will be kept in the complaints file.
- 7.6. If anonymous complaints are received, as far as possible, the organisation will promote the complaints procedure and ensure appropriate supports are in place to facilitate complaints being made.

Date of complaint: _____

Complaint made by: _____

Complaint received by: _____

Complaint made by: Telephone _____

Letter (attached) _____

In person _____

Other _____

- Name of complainant(s): _____
Address of complainant/s: _____

1. Who is the complaint on behalf of: _____
2. Who is making the complaint: _____
3. What is their relationship _____
4. Does the representative have the complainant's written consent to represent their interests?
Yes _____
No _____

[illegible]

The complainant's desired outcome would be:

Signed

Complainant: _____ Date: _____

Manager: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your comments. Complaints are valuable in helping to maintain and improve the service of SER Family Support Network

How is the complaint being dealt with? (To be completed by the coordinator)

Actions and outcomes (to be reported by to the Coordinator)

Complaints Process – Information for Service Users

Who can complain?

- 1) Anyone who is a user of the service.
- 2) An advocate may complain on the service user's behalf provided they have the service user's written consent.
- 3) A parent / guardian may complain on behalf of a child.

What can you complain about?

- 1) Any part of the service that you have received
- 2) A decision made about you that affects you
- 3) Being denied a service
- 4) A change in service provision
- 5) A member of staff

Important things to note:

- 1) You have the right to complain when you are unhappy with the service.
- 2) If staff cannot address your issue then they will help you write down your complaint so it can go to the manager.
- 3) If you make a complaint then you will not be treated differently following the complaint. The service sees complaints as a way to improve what we do.

Complaints involving staff:

If you wish to make a complaint about a staff member

- Tell one of the team and you will be referred to a manager, who will help you follow the process.
- Note that the staff member will be informed that a complaint has been made against them.
- If you want to complain about the manager then the complaint can go to someone more senior, again let a member of staff know.

Complaint Process

- All complaints will be taken seriously.
- If you tell a staff member about a complaint, the staff member will try to resolve the issue with you. If this does not happen and you are still unhappy then the staff member will help you complete a Complaints Record Form or write a complaint letter, which will be given to the manager.
- Once you have written down the complaint the manager will investigate the problem and get back to you in 10 working days with a response.

- If you are unhappy with the response, let the manager know and a meeting can be set up with someone more senior in the organisation (within four weeks).
- You can bring a family member or other advocate to this meeting. Following this meeting you will be informed of an outcome after three days.