Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

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Introduction

This policy is principally concerned with complaints made against Wycombe Mind staff, trustees, volunteers or about the services the organisation provides. This policy can be used by clients, volunteers and the general public, but is not intended for us by staff who should instead use the Grievance Policy or Whistleblowing Policy. This policy may also not be used for complaints by service users against other service users.

The role of compliments, comments and complaints in service management

In order to provide high quality services Wycombe Mind invites and uses feedback. It is important that we are aware and informed about the quality of what we do. This gives us the chance to put things right where action is needed and the means to continue to improve. It also helps us to protect those who are vulnerable. Anybody giving a compliment, comment or making a complaint can feel secure that they will not be victimised for doing so. Issues raised through complaints will be investigated rigorously and responded to fairly.

The opportunity to give a compliment, comment or make a complaint is an essential right for all those who use the services provided by Wycombe Mind. Compliments, comments and complaints can be a valuable way of evaluating and improving our services and of ensuring that they are responsive to the needs and preferences of its users.

Compliments and comments

Compliments and comments can be given at any time by service users or members of the public. Wycombe Mind actively encourages feedback in order to be an organisation which continually improves. We value the feedback we are given whether this is a compliment or a comment such as feedback about doing something differently or doing something better.

- Informal feedback can be given at any time by talking to a member of staff or volunteer.
- Formal feedback can be given through the service user forum for day services, through evaluation of projects and through the feedback box at the centre.
- There is also a feedback form which anyone can request at any time to give feedback.
- If someone wants to make some specific comments about a service or project and would rather speak to a member of staff then a phone call or meeting can be requested in order to make these comments and gain a response. The staff member will make a record of the feedback on the feedback form.

- All feedback is regularly reported to the Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees in order that effective evaluation and monitoring of services can be carried out and improvement or development areas identified.

- Feedback is valued by the Board of Trustees who following review of feedback will provide a summary of the outcome of the feedback and any development actions they have authorised. This will either be given directly to the person who gave the feedback where this was not anonymous or will be presented at the next Service User Forum for day services or directly to the service users of the project which the feedback related to.

Opportunities for feedback and complaints

Service users who wish to complain may be advised to use an advocate from another service to support them with the process. A list of other advocacy organisations in Buckinghamshire that might help you with such a complaint can be found on the Action for Advocacy website (www.A4A.co.uk). Wycombe Mind staff must support you to access this information if you feel that you might want to do so.

Service users must be encouraged to give feedback and be involved in the running of the service on a regular basis. Opportunities for doing so must be encouraged whenever possible, such as at the end of groups or at the Wycombe Mind service users' forum.

Complaints procedure

Information about making an informal complaint

Staff members must ensure that anyone who accesses a service at Wycombe Mind knows how to complain. A feedback box should be clearly visible so that service users are better enabled to make complaints. Where possible, complaints should be recorded on the complaints record. Copies of this form are available in the office.

Wycombe Mind aims to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- They treat all complaints seriously as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with a service which calls for an immediate response;
- Complainants are treated with courtesy and fairness at all times.
- They deal with your complaint promptly, politely and in confidence. It is likely however that they will need to share details with relevant employees in order to investigate your complaint fully.
- They respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where the organisation got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc;

- They learn from complaints, use them to improve services, and regularly review the organisation's complaints policy and procedures.

Wycombe Mind recognises that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly.

The organisation aims to:
- Resolve informal concerns quickly (within ten working days if possible);
- Keep process as straightforward and accessible as possible;
- Enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been referred if appropriate.

Wycombe Mind encourages and supports service users and other stakeholders to communicate openly and assertively to try to resolve the complaint at an informal level. Dealing with issues directly in this way maximises the likelihood of a positive outcome.

Persistent/vexatious complainants may have a genuine grievance but take inappropriate steps to complain. All complaints will be dealt with fairly and appropriately while ensuring that other clients, service users, staff or volunteers do not suffer detriment and that the resources of Wycombe Mind are used effectively.

An informal approach is recommended when it can be achieved. If concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

If a complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, informally then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Formal complaints procedure

Stage 1 Submit a complaint

1. If you wish to submit your complaint in writing you can request a Wycombe Mind Complaints Form, giving as much detail as possible. Please contact us if you need details of where help / support can be obtained with filling in the form or making a complaint, if necessary. Complaints can also be made verbally to a member staff, in this instance you will be directed to the most appropriate member of staff to take the details of your complaint.

2. The complaint form should be submitted by email to:

complaints@wycombemind.org.uk or in writing to Wycombe Mind Recovery Centre, 16-18 Easton Street, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1NT, in person or by calling 01494 448279. You will be sent an acknowledgement of receipt of your complaint within 5 working days.

3. Your complaint will be forwarded to the relevant member of the team who will forward the complaint to the person who will be investigating your complaint.

- If the complaint is against a non-management employee a member of the Senior Management Team will investigate the complaint unless there would be a conflict.
- If the complaint is against a manager Chief Executive will investigate the complaint.
- If your complaint is against the Chief Executive a member of the Board of Trustees will investigate the complaint.
- If your complaint is about a trustee, the Chair of Trustees will investigate the complaint.

Wycombe Mind reserves the right to appoint an independent investigator for complaints where this is appropriate.

In order to resolve issues as efficiently as possible, the complaint should be made as soon as possible after the incident.

4. Service users can choose to make a complaint via an advocate, relative or friend. If this is the case, it should be made clear that it is the service user making the complaint supported by the third person, rather than the third person making the complaint. All communication will be sent to the complainant and if the complainant requests copies can be sent to the third person.

5. If a third person (such as a relative or other worker) makes a complaint, the person investigating the complaint will first inform the individual concerned about this complaint. A conversation or meeting will be set up between the investigator, the individual making the complaint and the person they are making the complaint for.

Stage 2 Investigating the complaint

1. The investigator (as stated above) may first arrange a conversation or meeting to discuss the complaint with the complainant, to get full details of the complaint and find out how the complainant would like to see it resolved.

The investigation will be completed within 15 working days. If this is not possible, they will write to you to explain the reasons why.

2. The person investigating the complaint will inform the person or persons who the complaint has been made against, and their line manager(s), outlining details of the complaint. As part of their investigation, they will interview this person or persons and any other witnesses.

3. The person investigating will write to the complainant, outlining the facts they have ascertained and the decision they have come to. The complainant will be asked to give their response in writing either that they are happy with the outcome or that they wish to appeal the decision.

Stage 3 Appealing against the decision

1. If the complainant is not happy with the outcome of the investigation and wish to appeal against the decision made, they must state this in writing via letter or email to the Chair of Trustees, Huw Thomas, Wycombe Mind Recovery Centre, 16-18 Easton Street, High Wycombe, HP11 1NT or email complaints@wycombemind.org.uk within 10 working days of receiving the decision.
2. The appeal investigation will be carried out at the next Trustee meeting. Trustee meetings are usually held every first Thursday of the month.
3. A response to the complaint will be made in writing within 2 weeks of this Trustee Meeting.
4. The response of the Appeal will be final and no further internal investigations will take place.

Independent Complaints Officer to look for a resolution.

If the person making the complaint is unhappy with the handling of the complaint they can contact the Independent Complaints Officer. This person is: Joe Bradsahw:

Email: joe.bradshaw1@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Phone: 01494 421367

Wycombe Mind endeavours to resolve any complaints and make improvements where necessary in a timely manner.