**Complaints, Comments and Compliments**



**What the people we support say about this policy:** *“I need to know who to speak to when I am not happy”                “If things go wrong I want you to fix it”*

*“I’m not complaining, I just want you to know how things can be done better”*

**What families say about this policy:** *“Usually I can just speak to the manager or team but it’s good to know what to do if this doesn’t work”              “I need you to sort things quickly when there are issues”*

**Policy Strategy**

We Change Lives (WCL) is committed to providing high standards of service.  We can do this by listening to the people we support, their families, representatives and advocates.

Feeling able to assert one’s rights is an important act of empowerment so we will actively encourage people to complain if they are not happy about something and we will log all complaints, learn from them and make necessary changes to put things right, including apologising for mistakes and failures (Duty of Candour, Regulation 20 of the Health and Social Care Act, 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014). See **Duty of Candour Policy P00018**

WCL will also take into account Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014: Regulation 16 to ensure that people can make complaints about their care and support and that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to allow them to do this effectively.

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/regulations-enforcement/regulation-16-receiving-acting-complaints>

A complaint is not always a ‘bad’ thing. We understand that complaints can be constructive, and we will continually review our learnings from them. We can make real improvements to services and avoid getting things wrong in the future if we treat them this way.

We welcome all feedback including positive comments and compliments which we will also log, review and evaluate. For more detailed information on how we will encourage and respond to feedback see our: **Communication and Involvement Policy P00073**

**Decision Makers**

The Policy Owner will co-ordinate this policy and oversee any amendments brought about by changes in legislation in consultation with The Chief Executive Officer and Deputy CEO/Head of Care using the organisational values as a guide. It will be presented to the WCL Senior Management Team.

**Policy Guidelines**

**Complaints**

**Welcoming Complaints -** We will do this through:

* Talking to people and helping them feel safe to complain particularly upon introduction to a service.
* Maintaining an open culture ensuring that dialogue is naturally occurring enabling smaller concerns to be resolved before they become aggravated complaints.
* Encouraging feedback through a variety of methods including feedback boxes, resident meetings/surveys, relative surveys and advocacy.
* Empowering and encouraging people to speak up for themselves. This is especially important for people who have difficulty communicating and we will enable them to give their views through support provided by colleagues such as understanding body language and utilising any communication aids available.
* Having available a **Complaints Comments and Compliments Booklet F00061** in every service so that everyone understands how to complain.
* Never getting defensive when someone tells us we could be doing something differently.
* Logging all complaints and learning from each one.
* Making the Complaints Comments and Compliments Booklet available in different formats including easy read versions **F00061 (a-e)** which are accessible in service locations.
* We will also make it easy for people to contact us via our website.
* Carrying out comprehensive investigations into relevant complaints and concerns.
* Have mechanisms to log complaints, comments and compliments so that we can analyse and learn from what we have done.

**How do we define a complaint?**

WCL considers a complaint to be an expression of dissatisfaction about a specific service or services.

Complaints about WCL could include:

* Failure to provide a suitable standard or level of service
* Failure to follow our policies and procedures
* Failure to follow our Respect Statement
* Failure to keep our Promise
* Failure to consider all relevant information when coming to a decision
* Delay or failure to respond to a request for service or an enquiry
* Attitude or behaviour of colleague/s
* Not sticking to our Values

This list is not exhaustive but is intended to offer general guidance.

**How do we ask people to express their complaint to us?**

* Discussion with a colleague within a service
* Discussion with a Service Manager
* To the Head of Care or the Chief Executive Officer (normally at second stage or if they want to complain about a Service Manager or organisation as a whole).

There is no such thing as an informal or formal complaint. A complaint is a complaint and should be dealt with positively and in accordance with this policy.

A complaint does not have to be in writing. Individuals and their families/representatives can contact us face to face, by telephone, email or letter.   See **Complaints Comments and Compliments Booklet F00061**

If they are not happy with the response, we will provide them with details as to how to take their complaint further.

Sometimes we will decide to treat something as a complaint because it is the best way to deal with it. The person does not need to call it a complaint.

**Who can complain?**

* Anyone who uses our services
* Anyone who has a family member who uses our services
* Anyone who affected by something that we have done

**How do we respond to a complaint?**

For more detailed information on how colleagues should deal with and process a complaint together with how we will review our learnings see: **WCL Complaints Comments and Compliments Procedures B00053**

**Stage 1 – Local Resolution**

The Service Manager or person who is responding to the complaint will explain the reasons behind the decisions and actions. They will ensure there is open and honest dialogue in order to ensure that the complaint is considered thoroughly. A complaints resolution should usually be followed through in a letter (unless this is not an appropriate communication method).

Timescales: We aim to acknowledge a complaint within 5 working days of receiving it and give a full response within 10 working days. If it is going to take longer to resolve we will keep the individual/s up to date with expected timescales.

If an individual is not happy with the outcome of a complaint then they can request that the complaint is escalated to a Stage 2 complaint.

**Stage 2 Unresolved Complaint**

If the complaint has not been resolved under Stage1, or the complainant is unhappy with the way we have handled their concerns then they can take the complaint to stage 2.  This will then be taken up by the Head of Care or their absence the Chief Executive Officer and given new consideration. The outcome will be discussed with the complainant initially and will then be followed through in a letter (unless this is not an appropriate communication method).

For such complaints the **WCL Complaints Record and Investigation Form F00040** should be used as this will help document the complaint, keep a record of any investigation carried out and keep a detailed record of the outcome and any improvements implemented.

Timescales:  We will acknowledge the complaint within three working days of receiving it. We will then discuss the details further with the individual and agree a timescale for resolution.

**Stage 3 Taking the Complaint Further:**

If the person making the complaint is not happy at any point in how their complaint is being handled or is not happy with the response after Stage 2 they can take this complaint further by contacting one of the organisations below:

* Relevant Local Authority Complaints Team (if it relates to a service purchased on their behalf by the local authority)
* Care Quality Commission (CQC) (if it relates to a registered service)
* The Local Government Ombudsman

People can get support with their complaint from a variety of places including:

* Advocacy Services
* Citizens Advice Bureau

Contact details for these organisations can be found in our **Complaints Comments and Compliments Booklet F00061**

**Comments**

A comment is an observation made about something. It can either be positive, negative, or even neutral.

We will record all such feedback and endeavour to use this information to inform, improve and/or develop the services we offer to people. However, we should always consider whether a critical comment is better treated as a complaint. Each service should look to positively encourage feedback and comments and keep a written record of feedback and actions taken. Also see **Accessible Information, Communication and Involvement Policy P00073.**

For more detailed information on how colleagues should handle and review comments see:

**WCL Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedures B00053**

**Compliments**

A compliment is any positive feedback somebody wants to give about what we do. As an organisation, we love to hear positive feedback and this can help us when planning for the future needs of individuals. Our colleagues are proud of the job they do and compliments make a huge difference to their working lives.

WCL can learn just a much from compliments as we can from mistakes. Whenever possible we should consider and understand why we did something well and then share that best practice.

For more detailed information on how colleagues should handle and review compliments see:

**WCL Complaints Comments and Compliments Procedures B00053**

**Specific Scheme Relevant Information**

The policy applies to all WCL services and its subsidiaries. It also applies to all staff, Board Members, volunteers and may apply to any contractors who work on any of our premises.

**Our Values**

Seeing the possibility to make a positive difference in all that we do

* By listening to all feedback and acting upon it to make improvements to how we deliver our services.

Appreciating every colleague's contribution

* By ensuring colleagues fully understand the part they play in the complaints process.

Supporting rights needs choices and dreams

* By recognising that we may not get things right all the time but that by listening carefully to feedback we can make our services better and that people we support have the right to complain.

Being financially responsible and economically sustainable

* By learning from the things we have done wrong and turning such occurrences into positive experiences and looking where improvements can be made across the organisation.

Embrace new technology and innovation

* By using software such as Nourish.

**Our Purpose and Promise**

Our Purpose is ‘Supporting people to live their best life’ and we can do this best when we encourage and promptly respond to feedback, complaints and concerns.  Living your best life is speaking up and having your views heard. The rights of a person is the right to be heard.  We Promise to make sure your voice is heard and we can do this effectively by having procedures in place to record, respond and review all complaints, comments and compliments.

**Associated Documents**

Policies:

P00018 Duty of Candour Policy

P00073 Communication and Involvement Policy

Procedures:

B00053 Complaints Comments and Compliments Procedures

Forms:

F00040  Complaints Record and Investigation Form

F00061 Complaints Comments and Compliments Booklet

F00061 (a-n) Easy Read Complaints Forms

**Review and Update**

The Policy Owner will review this policy and any relevant procedures and forms in line with our Policy Management Action Plan or sooner should a change in legislation occur.

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| *Policy ratified by* | *Board* | |
| *Policy ratification date* | September 2022 Board meeting | |
| *List of Amendments/Reviews* | *Date* | *Topic* |
| 25.1.24 | Updated to reflect the wider 3L aquistion |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| *Wirehouse Approval* | Not Required | |
| *Next Ratification due* | Aug 2025 | |