

Complaints Procedure – SH23.1

Complaints

Stonepillow aim to provide a high-quality service at all times. This procedure outlines how complaints from clients, members of the public or other stakeholders are managed if our service delivery is felt to be unsatisfactory.

Complaints provide an opportunity to discuss and explore any issues and improve service delivery. Stonepillow is committed to being a learning organisation. The aims of the procedure are to ensure that:

- Complaints are dealt with promptly, courteously, systematically and fairly.
- Complaints are dealt with within the guidelines of our confidentiality policy.
- Complainants are kept informed of the progress and the outcome of any investigation.
- Complaints are recorded and monitored to assist the organisation to learn from mistakes and improve service delivery.

Principles of the Complaints Policy

Complaint handling:

When we receive a complaint, the team leader or service manager of the service will:

- Acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days.
- Understand the issues and outcome sought.
- Identify what actions may be needed to resolve the complaint.
- Confirm if the team leader or manager will investigate the complaint.
- Identify any vulnerabilities or needs relevant to resolving the complaint and make any necessary reasonable adjustments.
- If we decide not to accept the complaint, we will provide a detailed explanation and set out the reasons why.
- Manage expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic.
- Always ensure the person handling the complaint provides a single point of contact for the complainant and has the knowledge to deal with the complaint effectively.
- When a complaint involves more than one service area, the complaint will be allocated to a lead officer from the service area that forms the main basis of the complaint. The lead manager will respond to all matters in the complaint, obtaining information from other teams as necessary.
- Maintain clear record keeping and accurately log the complaint capturing all relevant information, ensuring all decisions made including compensation offers are noted on InForm.
- Contact the complainant before closing the case to ensure all agreed actions have been completed.
- All correspondence relating to a formal complaint will come from Stonepillow.

Helping homeless people

- Record all lessons learnt on the Complaint InForm record so we can continually improve our services.

Complaints Process

We operate a two-stage complaints process for formal complaints:

Stage 1 – Investigation and resolution

➤ The lead manager must make contact within five working days of being assigned the complaint to gather any additional information required and to agree a date for resolution. If additional complaints are raised during this investigation, we will aim to incorporate these into the stage 1 response, unless we consider it will unreasonably delay the response, in which case a new complaint will be logged.

➤ We aim to respond to complaints within 10 working days of being logged. In exceptional circumstances where we cannot meet the target because we do not have the answers, we will provide an explanation including a clear timescale of when the response will be received. This will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. Following the response any agreed actions will be monitored through to a conclusion and completed to a satisfactory standard.

➤ The full response will be in writing. The response will state that this is a stage 1 complaint, it will outline the complaint and set out the response in full. We recognise that complaints can be resolved in a number of different ways and as part of our response to complaints we will, where appropriate, offer a remedy that reflects the extent of any service failure(s) and the impact this may have caused, taking into account all of the circumstances. This may include acknowledging where things have gone wrong, providing an explanation, apologising, taking action to correct the issue, and using the feedback to inform improvements or changes to our services.

➤ Where the resolution to the complaint has been agreed by the lead manager and the complainant, the complaint will be closed at Stage 1.

➤ A complaint which has had a full response at stage 1 should not remain open beyond 28 calendar days from the date of the response, unless there are agreed actions that will take longer than 28 days to resolve.

➤ We reserve the right to close the complaint if no escalation has been requested and 28 days have elapsed.

Stage 2 – Senior Manager Review

➤ We will only escalate a complaint to stage 2 once stage 1 has been completed and at the request of the complainant. A complainant can ask to

escalate their complaint (by any means) to stage 2 if we fail to respond within the specified timescales (including any agreed extensions).

➤ Complainants who remain unhappy with the stage 1 response should let us know and we will escalate the case to stage 2. There may be occasions when it would not be appropriate to escalate the complaint to stage 2, for example if the outcome being sought was not within our power or ability to deliver. In cases such as these we will write to the complainant and explain why the complaint will not be escalated and what options are available.

➤ An acknowledgment to this request will be sent to the complainant within five working days.

➤ A senior manager, not previously involved with the complaint, will carry out a robust review of the complaint.

➤ The review will usually be restricted to the matters included in the stage 1 complaint unless we decide otherwise, for example where they relate directly to the original complaint. Any new issues not dealt with as part of stage 2 will need to be dealt with as a new complaint.

➤ The senior manager will make contact within five working days from the date of being assigned the stage 2 review.

➤ The senior manager will be responsible for:

- Understanding the issues and the outcome sought
- Reviewing the stage 1 investigation and actions to assess whether we have met our responsibilities
- Identify any additional actions that may be required to ensure that the complaint can be resolved.

➤ We aim to complete the stage 2 review within 20 working days from the date of receipt. In exceptional circumstances where we cannot meet the target because we do not have the answers, we will provide an explanation including a clear timescale of when the response will be received. This will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

➤ The senior manager will send a full written response to the complainant detailing the outcome of the review. Where the decision is that no further action is required, and that all reasonable and appropriate measures have been taken, the customer will be informed that they have reached the end of the complaints process and advised of the next available steps.

➤ The Senior Manager will ensure that all information is recorded and will monitor actions to completion.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following our final response, they can refer their complaint directly Head of Client Services.

Complaints made directly to the Chief Executive/Senior Leadership Team
 Correspondence sent to the Chief Executive or other members of the Leadership Team with a complaint will be investigated as a new complaint by the relevant service area of the organisation a complaint concerns the service or will be included as further information in a complaint already investigated.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality must be maintained at all stages throughout the Complaints Procedure by ensuring that only those who need to know have access to the details of the complaint. All papers relating to a complaint should be marked “Private and Confidential” and stored securely within the complaints file, which is stored with the Director of Operations.

Version	Date	Reason for change	Authorised by
Revised	April 2013	Changes in Practice	Stuart Gibbons
Revised	April 2014	Revision	Stuart Gibbons
Revised	May 2015	Revision	Dawn Dunn
Reviewed	March 2016	Review	Dawn Dunn
Reviewed	March 2017	Review	Martin Territt
Reviewed	March 2019	Review	Hilary Bartle
Revised	March 2023	updated with 2 tier procedure + InForm process	Anja Lock