

COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES



LOCATION	SHAREPOINT > STAFF > DOCUMENTS > GENERAL > POLICIES AND PROCEDURES > POLICIES		
LAST APPROVED	SEPTEMBER 2023	REVIEW CYCLE	AUGUST/SEPTEMBER
TO BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY			
RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES			
Managing challenging behaviour	Whistleblowing		
Compliments and Complaints leaflet	Equality and Diversity Policy		
Induction Policy	FCA Consumer Credit Source Book (CONC)		

CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

CHAT regards complaints as valuable feedback on the work of the organisation which can lead to improvements in its service. Clients and / or their representatives, organisations or individuals, including landlords, receiving direct or indirect services from employees or volunteers are fully entitled to make complaints concerning that work. Complaints from members of the public should also be dealt with efficiently and courteously.

Definition of a Complaint: Any oral or written expression of dissatisfaction whether justified or not, from, or on behalf of a client, about an act, omission, decision or service provided by CHAT.

The management of CHAT believes that if anyone wishes to make a complaint they should find it easy to do so and that every complaint must be taken seriously.

Subjects for complaint may include but are not limited to the following:

- An unwelcome or disputed decision
- Concern about the quality or appropriateness of a service
- Delay in decision making or provision of services
- Delivery or non-delivery of services
- Attitude or behaviour of staff (the term staff, wherever it appears, includes volunteers)
- Application of eligibility or assessment criteria

Opportunities to complain are advertised in CHAT public areas, are contained within documentation related to service delivery as part of our duty of care, on service leaflets and on the charity website. In accordance with Equality and Diversity Policy every effort will be made to ensure that a complainant is not disadvantaged in any way in their ability to make a complaint.

A Complaints Leaflet will be easily available with details of the procedures (including information about the Financial Services Ombudsman)

1. Oral Complaints

- Oral complaints, no matter how seemingly unimportant, should be taken seriously. Staff should seek to resolve the problem immediately if possible, in a polite, sympathetic and courteous manner and remain calm and respectful, providing private space where necessary.
- If a complaint is being made on behalf of a client by an advocate or representative, staff must verify that permission has been given by the client. Likewise, the member of staff must ensure that client is fully apprised of the outcome of the complaint themselves.

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- If the complaint involves a safeguarding concern, staff should consult the CHAT Safeguarding Policies as other agencies may need to be involved.
- If the matter cannot be resolved by a member of staff the complainant can request to see the Manager.
- If the Manager is not available an appointment will be made at the earliest opportunity or the complainant will be encouraged to complain in writing.
- Where a complaint is from a client staff should record the details of the complaint on AdvicePro.

2. Written Complaints

- If the matter could not be resolved by a member of staff verbally, the complainant will be invited to complain in writing to the Manager at the charity address or via email to theoffice@chatmid.co.uk.
- Should the complainant not be prepared to put their complaint in writing CHAT should continue to attempt to resolve the complaint to the best of their ability.
- In the first instance any complaint, whether from a volunteer, organisation, or client receiving a direct service, or a member of the public, should be sent to the Manager.
- The Manager will consider and investigate the complaint carefully and attempt to resolve the matter.
- During the course of the investigation all matters relating to the complaint will be treated in a confidential manner and will only be discussed with those immediately concerned.
- The Manager will, in normal circumstances, respond to the complaint in writing within 3 working days. Where this is not possible an acknowledgement will be issued as soon as possible and a full response issued within a further 10 working days.
- If either the complainant is not satisfied with the decision or the process of making the decision, or the Manager is unable to resolve the matter, then it must be referred to the Chair of Trustees. The manager will advise the complainant that they can appeal to the Chair of Trustees if not satisfied and will provide details of the Financial Ombudsman Service if the complaint involves Debt & Money Advice.
- A sub-committee of Trustees will be convened to consider the matter within fifteen working days.
- The complainant will be informed in writing of the decision and action taken. The Trustees' decision will be final.

3. Complaints about the Manager

- Where the complaint is about the Manager the matter should be referred in writing to the Chair of Trustees.
- The Chair of Trustees will usually respond to the complainant in writing within 3 working days where possible. If this is not possible the complainant will be informed of a reasonable timescale.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision or the process of making the decision, or the Chair of Trustees is unable to resolve the matter, a sub-committee of Trustees will consider the matter within fifteen working days.
- During the course of investigation into any complaint all matters relating to the complaint will be treated in a confidential manner and will only be discussed with those immediately concerned.
- The complainant will be informed in writing of the decision and the action taken. The Trustees decision will be final.

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Remedies and Resolutions

1. Where there has been found to be no substance to the complaint, the complainant will be informed of the decision.
2. Where there was found to be substance to the complaint action will be taken to address the problem, remedies will be offered to bring the matter to a close and consideration will be given to future action to prevent re-occurrence. The following actions may be taken:

Address the Problem

If it involves a member of staff action can include formal or informal warnings, disciplinary action and further training. There may also be mediation or external supervision offered in addition to the internal processes.

Offer remedies

The type of remedy will depend on the nature of the complaint. Where there has been distress caused, a letter of apology will be necessary. There may be discussion with the complainant as to the remedy that they would prefer. The Manager and/or the Chair of Trustees will consider what remedies might be available and ensure the necessary steps are taken.

Future Action

The Manager will be responsible for considering what needs to change, discussing the matter with the Chair of Trustees if necessary. Actions could include: retraining staff, issuing directives or amending work practices, which may include rewriting policies.

Whistleblowing

Where a member of staff feels that a complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved they may follow the CHAT Whistleblowing Policy.

Monitoring and review procedures

- The salient facts surrounding any complaint must be noted in the Complaints Book, together with a record of the actions taken to resolve it.
- This book will be presented to the Chair of Trustees quarterly, before the Trustees Meeting, to which they will make a report.
- Where complaints indicate there has been some systemic failure within the organisation, the trustees may ask the Manager to review how a service is delivered to avoid a repeat of an incident occurring.
- All staff (including volunteers) are made aware of our Complaints Policy and Procedure and are kept updated on an annual basis. Induction training for all new staff includes an understanding of the Complaints Policy, and how to recognise a complaint.
- As a Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulated debt advice provider CHAT will also ensure that our handling of complaints is at all times FCA compliant.

REVISIONS	
Sept 2023	Minor revisions