

SOUTH SOMERSET MIND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy Name: Complaints Policy

Issue Number: 6

Policy Statement

Here at South Somerset Mind we make every effort to provide a high standard of service to our service users and all partner colleagues. There may however be an occasion when a complaint needs to be raised or a compliment given. This procedure is designed to assist this process.

Our commitment to you

We aim to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy as possible
- We treat your complaint seriously
- We deal with your complaint promptly and in confidence
- We learn from complaints and use them to review and improve our service.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you tell us you are not happy about the service we provide.

- It can be about anything and could include:
- When we do not deliver a high standard of service
- When you are unhappy about any aspect of our service and provision
- When you have a problem with a member of staff.

South Somerset Mind Service users are entitled to make a complaint and have the complaint investigated and dealt with appropriately. This policy shows how.

This is the policy that we will follow if your complaint is about someone's conduct or behaviour. This could be because you think that someone has behaved in a way that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive or intimidating. It could be someone has broken important rules or policies.

Values and principles

You have the right to complain: we take complaints seriously. You should not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage because of making a complaint.

Equality: you should receive a proper response to your complaint, regardless of your age, gender, disability, race, religion, nationality, social status, sexual orientation or political persuasion.

Fairness: we believe that complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint should have a chance to contribute and respond to any investigation.

Safety and welfare: Will take priority and we will always give priority to concerns that affect safety and welfare. Issues affecting children and vulnerable adults will be treated very seriously.

Confidentiality: We treat complaints as confidentially as possible.

Sometimes we have to discuss complaints with other organisation. If we are worried about a risk to a person or to the public, we might need to pass on our concerns to the right authorities. If necessary, we will get advice from other organisations such as the Police or Social services.

How to make a complaint

If you have a complaint, you should in the first instance speak to any member of South Somerset Mind staff. They may be able to resolve your problem. You could also make a written complaint. The address for written complaints is:

**Alexander Priest
South Somerset Mind
Unit 4, Yeovil Small Business Centre,
Houndstone Business Park,
Yeovil,
BA22 8WA**

Please mark your envelope **Private and Confidential**.

If your complaint needs to be investigated further, you will normally be asked to put your complaint in writing. We accept anonymous complaints, but it is often very difficult to investigate these properly. It is easier for us to handle your complaint if you provide as much detail as possible.

If your complaint concerns our Senior Managers we will advise you who to write to. This may be one of our Chair's or Board Trustee.

What will happen once a complaint is received?

Your complaint will be fully investigated and a response issued within 10 working days. We may need to consult you at any stage to clarify any aspect of your complaint. We are confident that the issues you raise will be resolved.

If you are unhappy with the response the Chair(s) can be contacted in writing. Please address your correspondence to The Joint Chairs at the address above. Please mark your envelope **Private and Confidential**.

The Joint Chairs will consider your complaint and respond within 5 working days. If we believe that your complaint needs to be raised with the Board arrangements will be made accordingly.

We will investigate your complaint fairly. This means that we will discuss the complaint with all of the relevant people we will try to gather any information that may be relevant to handling your complaint.

Sometimes we will ask to show copies of information from the investigation to other people to allow them to respond. This is because we believe in fairness and openness. We will not share information if we think that this will endanger someone's safety or welfare.

Please note that for serious complaints, the Business Development Manager will notify the Head Office of National Mind.

Complaint progress

The person who will be your point of contact at South Somerset Mind will make sure that you understand the process, and will help to answer any questions or concerns that you have. If we are unable to resolve your complaint within our stated timeframe you will be given an update on the progress of your complaint every two weeks. If there are delays in handling your complaint for any reason, we will keep you informed. If your complaint leads to formal disciplinary action against someone, we will usually inform you about the outcome. We will not tell you the outcome if that person is a child, or if we believe that telling you would create a risk to other people. In this situation, we will still try to tell you about how you are affected by the action that we have taken.

The possible outcomes or results of a complaint

In many cases, we are able to resolve problems informally. This might include:

- A change in arrangements for particular activities
- An explanation or apology
- An agreement to communicate or act differently in future
- If an informal resolution is not suitable, then a small committee of Trustees will look at the information about the case. We will try to make sure that this committee does not contain anyone directly involved with your complaint. They might decide to take the following action:
 - Formal disciplinary action against a member of staff, volunteer or service user
 - Changes in policies and/or procedures
 - A decision to refer the case to another organisation such as the Police or Social Services
 - Closure of your complaint without action.