

## Complaints Policy & Procedure

### Policy

Path is committed to providing fair, effective and stakeholder-focused services. We aim to treat all stakeholders with respect, working to find effective solutions for those using our services.

We are therefore always pleased to receive and consider comments on our services, which we see as part of our continuous improvement. Path is particularly committed to enabling, responding to and learning from complaints.

All staff members are aware that stakeholders (including partner agencies) have a right to make comments on our services. Path service literature notes this, with brief details of how to begin this process.

Below is a summary of how Path processes complaints, which may be made by clients, landlords, partner agencies or others. In this case, complaints are comments or pieces of feedback reflecting concern or dissatisfaction with the way that Path has worked with someone or with the outcome of that work.

### Process (by stage)

#### 1. Informal concerns / complaints

In the first instance the member of staff who is dealing with a client or other stakeholder may realise that they may not be satisfied with the service they receive. The member of staff should always acknowledge the fact and seek to address any issues, themselves, also giving the stakeholder the option of formally complaining. The Path worker may therefore be able to deal with the matter successfully, to the satisfaction of the stakeholder in an informal manner.

As a rule, even when a concern has been satisfactorily addressed at the outset, the worker should note the issue with their manager, either immediately or in supervision.

In some cases, after a worker has unsuccessfully tried to resolve the issue, a manager may become involved (directly or indirectly) as part of de-escalation and resolution, while the complaint is still at an informal level. This does not preclude the manager being the person to be contacted for the second stage of a complaint, as below.

#### 2. Formal complaints

Where the stakeholder wishes to make a formal complaint, then the worker needs to acknowledge that and formally note with their manager that a complaint is being made. The worker will invite the complainant to make a written statement (offering Path's form but people may write a letter or email instead or even complain verbally for the worker to note and share). This should be addressed to the relevant manager.

Whether written on the Path complaints form or not, Path mostly needs to know and record:

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- the name of the person making the complaint
- the nature of the complaint
- against whom it is made
- the date
- if relevant, what the complainant was hoping for
- any other information the complainant wishes to supply

It is important that the person making the complaint knows that they are welcome to make the complaint and can ask for and will receive support in doing so.

If the stakeholder does not want to give the complaint to the worker they are engaging with then they should be informed that they could send the complaint personally to the relevant manager or have someone else engage with them over it. That may include asking for the support of another worker to use this process. Path will therefore support the writing and submitting of a complaint to the service manager.

In terms of Path's response:

- The manager (or, in their absence, another manager selected by the Development Manager or Director) will formally acknowledge the complaint within 7 working days
- The manager will then look into the complaint. This may involve further liaison with the stakeholder and / or the worker involved. Where full investigation of the complaint is going to take longer than a further week, the complainant will be given an update and notified of a timescale for dealing with it.
- Once the manager has come to a conclusion, they will contact the complainant to give a response to the complaint.
- The manager will also let any relevant staff members know, addressing any resulting issues and exploring opportunities for improvement. These may, for instance, involve procedural changes or training.

Again, Path's aims are to understand the complaint, to investigate and learn from it and to reach some kind of resolution with the person making it.

### 3. Appeals

If the stakeholder is not satisfied with the response from the manager, then the complaint can be sent to the Development Manager. An acknowledgement will be sent within 7 working days, as above, utilising the same format.

If the complaint concerns a manager, then the complaint can be directed straight to the Development Manager; if it concerns the Development Manager then the complaint can be directed to the Director; and if the Director, then the Chair of the board, who will delegate a fellow trustee to respond.

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### 4. Board of trustees

With a service complaint, after initially being responded to by the worker, and then the manager, the decision of the Development Manager, and – as a last resort – Director, would usually be final; but, if a complainant remains unsatisfied with the above process, the Director has the option of taking the complaint to the board, for advice or for trustee involvement.

In the event of any further appeal, the chair will investigate and their decision will be final.

### **Learning**

As noted, Path aims to always learn from feedback and uses it as part of continuous review and improvement. Matters thus raised may therefore (anonymously) be raised in review, operational management, board or other meetings, as Path seeks to improve its services. In terms of specific cases, the manager's or Director's response to a complaint may be to review certain procedures or training, for instance, as noted.

### **Promotion of this policy**

This policy is made available to all Path staff members, on Path's IT system; and is one of the key policies posted on Path's website, accessible to all.

### **Processing complaints**

See also:

- complaints form (making a complaint)
- complaints processing form
- guidance notes for managers.

### **Other relevant policies**

- Equality and Diversity
- Confidentiality
- Code of Conduct