



Contents:

1. Policy statements
2. Definition of a complaint
3. Procedure
 - Compliments
 - Complaints – Stage One
 - Complaints – Stage Two
4. Anonymous compliments and complaints
5. Data Protection
6. Recording
7. Monitoring
8. Third party complaints handling quality assurance and referral

Policy statement

Suffolk Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) strives for high standards in service delivery and operations. It welcomes feedback from individuals, intermediaries, charities, and anyone who works with us, on all aspects of our services and operation. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us evaluate and improve our work.

The objectives of the SPCF Compliments and Complaints Policy are to:

- Ensure everyone knows how to provide feedback and how a complaint will be handled.
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly, and sensitively within clear timeframes.
- Provide users with a fair and effective way to complain about our work.
- Ensure that compliments and complaints are monitored and used to improve our services.
- Ensure that stakeholders who have experienced unsatisfactory service from SPCF receive an appropriate level of remedy or compensation.
- Ensure that all insured losses are effectively handled by and recovered from SPCF's insurers.

SPCF will ensure that we:

- Listen carefully to complaints and treat complaints as confidential, where possible
- Record, store and manage all complaints accurately and in accordance with the Data Protection Act
- Investigate the complaint fully, objectively and within the stated timeframe
- Notify the complainant of the results of the investigation and any right of appeal

Compliments & Complaints Policy



- Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented in order to ensure that there is no re-occurrence
- Offer an appropriate level of redress to anyone who has received inadequate level of service from SPCF
- Report, on a quarterly basis to the Trustee Board, the number of compliments and complaints received, the outcomes of investigations and any actions.

Definition of a complaint:

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by a stakeholder. A person may make a complaint if they feel SPCF has:

- failed to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service
- delayed in providing a service
- made a mistake in the way it has provided a service
- failed to act in a proper way
- provided an unfair service.

This policy and procedure relate only to complaints received about SPCF and its services. Individuals who make complaints about partner organisations will be notified in writing that they need to complain to the organisation against which they have the complaint; and will be provided with contact details, where possible.

Compliments and Complaints Procedure

Compliments

Any verbal or written compliments will be recorded by the member of staff receiving the compliment and be passed to the Chair for recording on the Compliments Register. Any member of staff identified as being the subject or contributing to any matter giving rise to the compliment will be notified as soon as possible during the next five SPCF working days.

Complaints

There are 2 stages to the complaint's procedure:

Stage One - Complaint Stage Two - Independent Review

Stage One

SPCF aims to settle complaints quickly and satisfactorily by the member of staff who provides the service or the relevant manager. The complaint may be resolved informally by way of an apology, by providing the service required or an appropriate offer of redress or by providing an explanation to the user.

If the complaint involves financial loss or the risk of compensation the matter will be passed to SPCF's insurers who will take over all communication with the complainant. No SPCF employee or volunteer should make any admission of liability regarding a complaint which has, or has the potential to, become an insurance claim.

Compliments & Complaints Policy



Individuals wishing to make a complaint should contact the person who provided the service, or their manager. Alternatively, they can contact SPCF by emailing sue.willgoss@suffolkpcf.co.uk or by using the contact form at www.suffolkpcf.co.uk. If the complaint is about the Chair, please get in touch with the Chair of Trustees at confidential@suffolkpcf.co.uk. Complaint timescales will begin upon receipt of the complaint. Our working days are Monday – Friday, 9AM – 3PM, school term time only.

On occasions a compliment or complaint may need to be made on behalf of another person e.g. due to illness or incapacity. You will need to indicate whether the person on whose behalf you are acting is aware you are making a complaint or compliment on their behalf.

If the user prefers to make a verbal complaint, then the person receiving the call will enter details on the 'Verbal Complaints Form'. If the user is willing to/or asks to submit a written complaint, the 'Written Complaints Form' will be sent to them, or the individual can download a copy of the form from the website.

On occasions SPCF may receive a complaint that does not require an investigation e.g. the person complaining does not want to take the issue any further but wishes to make a statement- verbal or written. In such cases the line manager of the staff member/volunteer against whom such a complaint has been made has the authority to investigate the statement made and speak to the staff member involved. The complaint will need to be logged on to SPCF's complaints register so that a proper record is kept. We will not investigate vexatious complaints.

Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 SPCF working days. The complaints will be fully investigated, and a written response provided to the complainant within 28 SPCF working days by the Investigator.

Individuals will be advised that if they are not satisfied with the response to their complaint, they may appeal within 14 SPCF working days and progress to Stage Two.

Stage Two

An appropriately experienced individual who is not a member of SPCF would be asked to review the complaint and any investigation or actions taken.

The Independent Individual would then make a recommendation about whether:

- They feel the investigation and outcome already arrived at is appropriate.
- They can provide alternatives to outcomes made in Stage One.

We will acknowledge a Stage Two complaint within 5 working SPCF days. The timescale to investigate a Stage Two complaint will depend on the availability of the investigator.

Anonymous Compliments and Complaints

Compliments and complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if further information is required to ensure a full and fair investigation.



English as a Second Language.

If the complainant does not speak English as a first language, has Welsh as a preferred first language or has difficulties with written English the person concerned can ring our office and they can arrange for an interpreter to talk to the complainant through the use of Language Line. A member of the team, or the line manager responsible for the person against whom a complaint is being made, will be responsible for making a written record of the complaint as given via Language Line. They will then explain to the complainant what the next stages of the procedure and the timescales involved are.

Data Protection

To process a complaint, SPCF will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides, and which other people give in response to investigating the complaint. SPCF will hold this data securely and only use it in relation to the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be made known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public by SPCF. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applies, or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

In the case of a compliment any data about an individual will only be shared with that individual's permission.

Under the General Data Protection Regulations, individuals have a right to obtain a copy of any personal data that we hold. Any request for that information should be made in writing and not by email. SPCF will normally destroy its compliments and complaints files and therefore any individual data specifically relating to those complaints six years after the compliment has been made or the complaint closed. For further information please see our Data Protection Policy that can be found on our website or obtained by emailing confidential@suffolkpcf.co.uk.

Monitoring

Compliments and complaints are an important tool which, alongside data provided by exit surveys, user feedback and focus groups, allow SPCF to learn about the services we provide. They provide a useful source of information about how users see our services and how we are serving our users. To ensure SPCF can learn from compliments and complaints, the following data will be collected:

Compliments:

- Name and address
- Nature of the compliment
- Date of compliment
- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the compliment

Compliments & Complaints Policy



Complaints:

- Name and address
- Name of person dealing with the complaint
- Date of complaint and response date
- Nature of complaint
- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the complaint
- Lessons learnt

Compliments and complaints information will be considered on a regular basis by the SPCF Management Committee.

Policy and Procedure adopted: October 2021

Last review: November 2024

Next Review date: November 2025