



**Sefton CVS**  
Supporting Local Communities

## **Comments & Complaints Policy & Procedure**

**Prepared By:** Simone McCaskill  
**Approved By Board:** November 2016  
**Last Reviewed:** July 2021  
**To be reviewed:** July 2022

## **1. Overview / Policy Statement**

Sefton CVS is committed to the provision of high quality services in accordance with the needs and expectations of the voluntary, community and faith sector, users and its stakeholders.

Sefton CVS recognises the value of stakeholder opinion and its contribution to the continuous improvement processes of policy formulation and service delivery.

Any complaint about any aspect of the organisation will be taken seriously and processed according to the agreed procedures. Users, stakeholders and potential users of Sefton CVS services will be provided with information about how to make a complaint.

Sefton CVS also wishes to encourage suggestions as to how its services could be improved, and welcomes feedback from users and stakeholders.

A user or stakeholder may be a voluntary, community and faith sector organisation, service user, a delivery partner, a member organisation, a partner organisation or a member of the community.

## **2. Aim**

Sefton CVS aims to:

- Provide users and stakeholders with the best possible service.
- Resolve complaints within a specified timescale.
- Provide users and stakeholders with an effective and efficient means of resolving dissatisfaction with services provided by Sefton CVS.
- Provide a clear procedure for dealing with complaints.
- Communicate effectively with a complainant throughout the complaints procedure.
- Provide a way of rectifying injustice whenever possible.
- Monitor information on complaints and wider feedback and use this to ascertain ways to improve our services to meet the needs of users and stakeholders.

A complaint is defined as follows: “An expression of dissatisfaction with a Sefton CVS service, which requires a response.”

Sefton CVS aims to establish an effective complaints procedure which:

- Will be easily accessible and advertised widely
- Will be easy to understand and use
- Will operate promptly within a specific timetable established to deal with complaints
- Will ensure that the complainant is kept informed about what is happening to his/her complaint
- Will be fair, with a full and unbiased enquiry

- Will be confidential, in order to ensure fairness to complainants and staff
- Will produce information which will help managers to learn how to improve the service
- Will ensure that it is possible to take relevant steps to eradicate shortcomings in the service

### **3. Scope**

This policy and associated procedure covers all Sefton CVS interactions and the Comments & Complaints procedure is open to any stakeholder who has recent experience of Sefton CVS services / activity in whatever form. All complaints must be made in writing within 90 days of the initial occurrence of the event that has led to the complaint being raised; Sefton CVS will not respond to complaints relating to historic issues.

### **4. Responsibilities**

All employees (including volunteers and associates) have a responsibility to ensure that comments and complaints relating to Sefton CVS are handled appropriately. Complaints received, whether written or spoken, should be escalated to a line manager in the first instance.

The CEO is ultimately responsible for overseeing comment / complaint handling across the organisation.

### **5. Monitoring & Review**

The Sefton CVS Management Team will be responsible for reviewing and/or amending the policy and procedure as required.

The Sefton CVS Board will review reports in respect of complaints, their resolution and any resulting quality improvement actions.

## **6.0 PROCEDURE**

### **6.1 *Mechanism for inviting and making a complaint***

- All complaints must be made within 90 days of the initial occurrence of the event that has led to the complaint being raised. In the first instance, complaints should be set out in writing and addressed to Human Resources.

#### **Contact details:**

Human Resources, Sefton CVS  
Suite 3B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, North Wing,  
Burlington House,  
Crosby Road North, Waterloo,  
Merseyside, L22 OLG

- The letter will be acknowledged, normally within 10 working days of receiving it. The Human Resources Officer may, where applicable, appoint an Investigative Officer to lead on the issue/case.
- The Investigative Officer will arrange for an investigation into the circumstances outlined in the complaint, and will reach a decision regarding it. A response will be sent to the complainant within 28 working days of first receiving the letter of complaint. However, where a complaint relates to a member of staff that is absent from work, the complainant will be advised that the investigation is suspended until this staff member returns to work. At the point at which the member of staff is back in the workplace, the complainant will be contacted to confirm whether they wish to continue to pursue the complaint given the lapse of time. If the complainant does not respond within 10 working days of this contact, the complaint will be considered closed.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and decision they may write to the Chair of the Board of Directors of Sefton Council for Voluntary Service at the address above.
- The Chair will acknowledge receipt of the letter within 10 working days where possible.
- Where the complainant has appealed to the Chair for a review of the response to the complaint an investigation will be carried out by the Chair, or another Member of the Board of Directors acting on their behalf.
- The Chair, or another Member of the Board of Directors acting on their behalf, will aim to produce a decision, and to notify the complainant of their conclusions, together with a clear explanation of the reasons for reaching them, within 15 working days of receiving the letter. *This will be the final stage in the Sefton CVS Complaints Procedure.*
- All complaints received, together with a copy of the response to the complainant, will be notified to the Chair of the Board of Directors.
- Complaints will be monitored, and information from this will be fed into the planning process as appropriate.

## **6.2 Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints**

- Sefton CVS is committed to dealing with all clients fairly, ensuring we provide high quality services, and a clear, and timely response when they contact us. The Sefton CVS Comments & Complaints Policy & Procedure is enforced to ensure that this is the case.

- However, in certain cases people may pursue their complaints in a way that is unreasonable. They may behave unacceptably, or be unreasonably persistent in their contacts and submission of information. These actions can occur either while their complaint is being investigated, or when the complaint investigation is finished.
- Single incidents may be unacceptable in themselves, but more often the difficulty is caused by unreasonably persistent behaviour that is time consuming to manage and interferes with proper consideration of the complaint.
- Sefton CVS will implement the Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints Policy & Procedure where *the nature or frequency of the complainant contacts, impede the organisation's consideration of their or other people's, complaints or otherwise disproportionately impact on the operational capacity of the organisation.*

### **6.3 Recording Feedback and Learning from Complaints**

#### ***Monitoring and Recording***

All complaints and appeals will be recorded on a database. Sefton CVS will monitor trends and performance in the handling of complaints, and produce regular reports for SMT / Board, who will take action to address any failings.

Investigative Officers will ensure that all relevant documentation is shared for logging, including a copy of the CVS response to complaints / appeals and details of:

- the decision taken
- the findings of the investigation
- the solution (e.g. apology, provision of service)
- any learning points for action to improve the service or prevent a recurrence of any failings
- the action, if any, proposed to resolve any problems

#### ***Document Retention***

A summary of all complaints will be permanently retained / archived.

Where the complaint results in significant changes to policy or procedures and related responses, complaint documentation and electronic files will be destroyed **6** years after administrative use is concluded.

General complaint documentation and electronic files will be destroyed **3** years after administrative use is concluded.

#### **6.4 *Mechanism for compliments and comments***

- Feedback about services working well, or particularly good service from staff is also useful. Sefton CVS welcomes any and all comments regarding our services.
- Sefton CVS will invite compliments and comments through this procedure and will monitor and use this to spread good practice and help to improve our services.
- Please send any comments or suggestions to:

**Contact details:**

Human Resources, Sefton CVS  
Suite 3B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, North Wing,  
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