



Branch Out Together

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Reviewed: September 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Branch Out Together welcomes comments, suggestions and complaints about the services we provide to children and/or their family/carers. We want to ensure that they are delivered to the highest standards and every complaint is an opportunity to look at what we do and make improvements.

This complaints policy has been drawn up to help us deal with complaints fairly and honestly.

We will explain how you can make a complaint and provide support if you need it. You can also enlist the support of someone, such as an advocate, from an independent organisation. We will get back to you within 5 working days to let you know how we propose to handle your complaint and will keep details of your complaint confidentially.

All Branch Out Together staff/volunteers are expected to understand the benefits of the complaints procedure, how to support service users and others to complain, and how to help them feel comfortable about complaining if they need to.

- 1.2 For the purposes of this policy a complaint is defined as: An expression of dissatisfaction about:
- the standard or quality of service, or,
 - any action or lack of action by Branch Out Together or its staff/volunteers which has affected an individual or group of individuals receiving services from us.

2. Principles

- 2.1 When responding to a complaint we will adhere to the following principles:
- a) Those who complain will be given a clear response to their complaint within clearly defined timescales and in a sensitive and sympathetic manner.
 - b) We will use evaluation of complaints to improve the service.

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c) Complaints will be well managed, objectively considered and the process aimed at resolving problems as soon as possible in a manner which respects confidentiality and privacy.

d) An independent advocate who is not employed by or otherwise connected with Branch Out Together may, in particular circumstances, be offered to support a child or their family/carer with a complaint. Service users may wish to select their own advocate, or approach organisations that provide such services.

e) The complainant will not be discriminated against for making a complaint.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy and procedure relates to all services provided by Branch Out Together.

Complaints can be made by any of the following:

- Child or young person or adult
- A family member, carer, friend or guardian
- A concerned member of the public
- An individual or organisation with a legitimate interest or concern regarding Branch Out Together or its staff/volunteers.

3.2 Any complaint or allegation, which indicates possible or actual abuse of a child, will be dealt with through Branch Out Together's Child Protection Policy.

4. Complaints Procedure

4.1 Complaints can be made by any reasonable means, including email, letter, telephone call and made to any person acting on behalf of Branch Out Together. Where appropriate and required, the person making the complaint will be taken through the process in an easily understandable manner.

4.2 All complaints will be recorded in a Central Complaints Log, along with progress and outcomes. This information will be reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer monthly.

4.3 The procedure encompasses the following stages:

Informal

- This stage may be used to advise a member of staff/volunteer or the manager of a particular problem allowing them to resolve the matter quickly and at a local level. The Care and Support Manager (or other appropriate member of



staff) will respond to the complaint either verbally or in writing within 5 working days.

Stage One - Formal

- This stage formalises the complaint and also provides the Care and Support Manager (or other appropriate member of staff) with the opportunity to resolve the matter. The manager will acknowledge a formal complaint in writing within 5 working days and respond to it within 20 working days.

Stage Two – Formal

- This stage involves the Chief Executive Officer of Branch Out Together who is ultimately responsible for the service. The Chief Executive Officer will acknowledge the complaint within 10 working days of receipt and respond to the complainant in writing within 25 working days to advise of the outcome. This stage provides an opportunity for the CEO to review action taken to date and the decision reached. It also provides an opportunity for first time complaints of a serious nature, or any complaint made specifically about a Manager or other supervisory person, to be heard at a senior level.

Complainants can also have a complaint heard by the CEO where:

- The complaint is a policy or resource issue
- The complaint is about misconduct by senior management level staff.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees take an interest in all complaints; the Chief Executive Officer will report on complaints received and their outcomes to the Chair of the Board at the earliest opportunity (normally the Board meeting following receipt of the formal complaint).

Where a complaint concerns the Chief Executive themselves or any activity which has involved the Chief Executive, the complaint will be dealt with by the Chair of the Board and the response will come from them directly.

5. Extending response timescales

- 5.1 Complaints of a more complex nature may take longer than the specified time limits to investigate. If this is the case, the complainant will be informed by the appropriate manager of the reasons why the timescales cannot be met and when they can expect to receive a full response.

6. Informing relevant people

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- 6.1 Branch Out Together will advise the child/family/carer and any relevant statutory agency whenever a child makes a complaint about our service and the outcome of that complaint in line with the above timescales.
- 6.2 In some instances for certain complaints it may be appropriate for a child's family or carer/support worker/social worker to accompany them during the investigation of their complaint.

7. Conclusion

Dealing positively with complaints, and ensuring complaints are dealt with appropriately and timeously, will not only improve the service we provide in Branch Out Together, it will provide the added reassurance to children and their families that their needs are being properly addressed.

8. Care Inspectorate

Most of our services are registered with the Care Inspectorate. If you wish to refer your complaint about a registered service directly to the Care Inspectorate, contact details are as follows:

Care Inspectorate
3 C & D South
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ
Tel: 0345 600 9527

www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/contact-us