

Policy on Complaints

Policy Statement

DSDT believes that if a service user wishes to make a complaint or register a concern they should find it easy to do so. It is the charity's policy to welcome complaints and look upon them as an opportunity to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services. This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and that all complaints or comments by service users and their relatives and carers are taken seriously.

The policy is not designed to apportion blame, to consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation. It is NOT part of the charity's disciplinary policy.

The charity believes that failure to listen to or acknowledge complaints will lead to an aggravation of problems, service user dissatisfaction and possible litigation. The charity supports the concept that most complaints, if dealt with early, openly and honestly, can be sorted out between just the complainant and the charity's representative. If this fails due to either the charity's representative or the complainant being dissatisfied with the result the complaint will be referred to the Board of Directors and legal advice will be taken as per necessary.

Aim

The aim of the charity is to ensure that its complaints procedure is properly and effectively implemented, and that service users feel confident that their complaints and worries are listened to and acted upon promptly and fairly.

Goals

The goals of the charity is to ensure that:

- service users, carers, users and their representatives are aware of how to complain, and the charity provides easy to use opportunities for them to register their complaints.
- members of the Board of Directors will be responsible for the administration of the procedure
- every written complaint is acknowledged within two working days
- investigations into written complaints are held within 28 days
- all complaints are responded to in writing by the charity
- complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and sensitively with due regard to the upset and worry that they can cause to both charity representatives and service users.

Any member of the Board of Directors receiving complaints will have the responsibility for following through. The Board of Directors contact details are available on website: www.downsyndromedevelopment.org.uk

Complaints Procedure

Oral Complaints

- All oral complaints, no matter how seemingly unimportant, should be taken seriously.
- Front line care staff who receive an oral complaint should seek to solve the problem immediately if possible.
- If staff cannot solve the problem immediately they should offer to get the manager to deal with the problem.
- All contact with the complainant should be polite, courteous and sympathetic.
- At all times staff should remain calm and respectful.
- Staff should not accept blame, make excuses or blame other staff.
- If the complaint is being made on behalf of the service user by an advocate it must first be verified that the person has permission to speak for the service user, especially if confidential information is involved. Explicit permission is needed prior to discussing the complaint with the advocate
- After talking the problem through, each manager or the member of staff dealing with the complaint should suggest a course of action to resolve the complaint. If this course of action is acceptable then the member of staff should clarify the agreement with the complainant and agree a way in which the results of the complaint will be communicated to the complainant (ie through another meeting or by letter).

- If the suggested plan of action is not acceptable to the complainant then the member of staff or manager should ask the complainant to put their complaint in writing to the charity and give them a copy of the complaints procedure and form for completion.
- In both cases details of the complaints should be recorded on a complaints form and handed to the Manager.

Written Complaints

- When a complaint is received in writing it should be passed on to the a member of *the* Board of Directors or manager who should record it in the complaints book and send an acknowledgment letter within two working days. The complaints manager or the Board of Directors will be the person who deals with the complaint through the process.
- If necessary, further details should be obtained from the complainant. If the complaint is not made by the service user but on the service user's behalf, then consent of the service user, preferably in writing, must be obtained from the complainant.
- A leaflet detailing the procedure should be forwarded to the complainant.
- If the complaint raises potentially serious matters, advice should be sought from a legal advisor to the charity. If legal action is taken at this stage any investigation by the charity under the complaints procedure should cease immediately.
- If the complainant is not prepared to have the investigation conducted by the charity he or she should be advised to contact the Charity's Commission and be given the contact details.
- Immediately on receipt of the complaint the charity should launch an investigation and within 28 days should be in a position to provide a full explanation to the complainant, either in writing or by arranging a meeting with the individuals concerned.
- If the issues are too complex to complete the investigation within 28 days, the complainant should be informed of any delays.
- If a meeting is arranged the complainant should be advised that they may, if they wish, bring a friend or relative or a representative such as an advocate.
- At the meeting a detailed explanation of the results of the investigation should be given and also an apology if it is deemed appropriate (apologising for what has happened need not be an admission of liability).
- Such a meeting gives the charity the opportunity to show the complainant that the matter has been taken seriously and has been thoroughly investigated.
- After the meeting, or if the complainant does not want a meeting, a written account of the investigation should be sent to the complainant. This should include details of how to approach the Charity's Commission if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome.
- The outcomes of the investigation and the meeting should be recorded on appropriate documentation and any shortcomings in the charity's procedures should be identified and acted upon.
- The charity should discuss complaints and their outcome at a formal business meeting and the charity's complaints procedure should be audited by the manager every six months.