

Healthwatch Hillingdon

Complaints Policy & Procedure

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CONTENTS

1. POLICY	3
2. SCOPE	3
3. STAGE ONE - Informal Complaint	4
4. STAGE TWO: Formal Complaint	4
5. Complaints Panel	5
6. STREAMLINING A COMPLAINT	5
APPENDIX 1: GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STAFF	6
APPENDIX 2: CUSTOMER COMPLAINT LOG	7

1. POLICY

- 1.1 Individuals and organisations have the right to express their views about Healthwatch Hillingdon's performance and the manner in which it discharges its responsibilities. Anyone directly affected by the way in which Healthwatch Hillingdon has carried out its functions may make a complaint under Healthwatch Hillingdon's Complaints policy.

Healthwatch Hillingdon (HWH) takes all complaints seriously and will work hard to ensure that the matter is resolved. We will treat both concerns and complaints in the same way.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all HWH employees and staff, including volunteers.
- 2.2 HWH will endeavour to understand the potential effect of its policies and practices on the staff, volunteers and communities, particularly those from 'protected' characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 section 149.

3. STAGE ONE: Informal Complaint.

- 3.1 If you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have received a less than satisfactory standard of service, in the first instance we would encourage you to raise a concern, or complaint, or to provide feedback on our service informally. Providing information or correcting misunderstandings or misconceptions at this stage may enable the issue to be successfully resolved. You should contact the member of staff who has been working with you and detail the nature of your complaint. Every effort will be made to resolve the matter as speedily as possible and to your satisfaction.
- 3.2 Every reasonable effort will be made for the response, whether oral or written, to be given within 10 working days of the receipt of your complaint.
- 3.3 A brief record of your complaint will be made on file (using the Customer Complaints Log - Appendix 3 if the complaint was resolved). This constitutes a resolution of the complaint.
- 3.4 If you are still dissatisfied, you may proceed to Stage Two of the complaints procedure.

4. STAGE TWO: Formal Complaint.

- 4.1 If you feel your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may lodge a formal complaint by speaking to or writing to either:
 - 4.2 The Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch Hillingdon, or:
 - 4.3 The Chair or Vice-Chair, Healthwatch Hillingdon.
- 4.4 You will receive an acknowledgement within five working days that your complaint has been received and is being investigated. The CEO or Chair/Vice-Chair will work with you and the appropriate member of staff to resolve the complaint and agree action points. We will probably talk to you over the phone and arrange face-to-face meetings where necessary. Any agreed action points will be confirmed in writing to you.
- 4.5 A record will be made on the Customer Complaints Log of how the complaint was resolved. A copy of the log and any correspondence will be kept on file. This constitutes a resolution of the complaint.
- 4.6 If you are unhappy with the outcome, you have the right to have your complaint heard by the Healthwatch Hillingdon Complaints Panel.

5. Complaints Panel.

- 5.1 The final stage of this internal procedure is to have your complaint investigated by a Complaints Panel drawn from the Board of Healthwatch Hillingdon. The Board members of HWH are non-remunerated trustees of the organisation. They are therefore independent of the staff body.
- 5.2 We will ask you to lodge your complaint in writing and explain why you found our attempts to resolve the complaint at Stage Two unsatisfactory. Formal complaints can be made in writing to the Chair or the Vice Chair at the address given in Stage Two.
- 5.3 You will receive an acknowledgement within five working days that your complaint has been received and is being investigated.
- 5.4 A Complaints Panel comprising of at least two board members and attended by the CEO and relevant Line Manager (if applicable) will meet at the earliest opportunity (within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint) and agree what action should be taken. A representative of this panel may contact you to gain further information or to invite you to attend a meeting if appropriate.
- 5.5 The Panel's decision and agreed action will be communicated to you in writing within 5 working days of the meeting referred to above (5.4). If this is unlikely to be possible, you will receive a reason in writing for the delay within a 5 day period.
- 5.6 A brief record will be made on file (using the Customer Complaint Log) of how the matter was resolved.
- 5.7 This represents the final internal stage of Healthwatch Hillingdon's complaints process.
- 5.8 However, you do have the right to have your complaint reviewed and look at by the independent Local Government Ombudsman:

The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry CV4 0EH
Tel.: 0300 061 0614 (open 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday)
For further information: <http://www.lgo.org.uk>

6. STREAMLINING A COMPLAINT

- 6.1 Notwithstanding anything contained in sections 2,3,4, and 5, if the Line Manager or CEO takes the view that the complaint is of a sufficiently serious nature, the process above should be streamlined and discretion should be used to escalate the matter to the Chair or Vice Chair of HWH's Board.

APPENDIX 1: GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Seven methods for defusing a difficult situation

1. LISTEN: carefully and with interest.
2. EMPATHISE: put yourself in the customer's place. What service would you want?
3. ASK QUESTIONS: in a mature, non-threatening way that requires the customer to think about their answer.
4. APOLOGISE: on behalf of the company without blaming yourself, or another colleague/partner organisation etc.
5. REPEAT: the situation back to the customer to check that you have understood fully.
6. SOLVE: the problem by identifying solutions to satisfy the customer. Tell the customer what you CAN DO, not what you can't. If you cannot solve the situation, find someone who can.
7. COMMUNICATE: ensure the customer is fully informed throughout the process, including letting them know when the process is delayed.

APPENDIX 2

Customer Complaint Log

Customer Details

Name	
Address	
Telephone No.	
Project Title/ Reference No.	
Nature of Complaint	

Stage One: Informal Complaint (to be completed by the project contact within 10 working days)

Action Taken		
Signed		Date

Stage Two: Formal Oral Complaint (to be completed by the Line Manager contact within 10 working days)

Action Taken		
Signed		Date

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Stage Three: Formal Written Complaint (to be completed by the CEO)

Written acknowledgement sent by		Date
Signed		Date

Stage Four: Complaints Panel (to be completed by the Chair or Vice Chair)

Written acknowledgement sent by		Date	
Panel Member		Position	
Panel Member		Position	
Panel Member		Position	
Action Taken			
Signed		Date	

Please ensure that a copy of the completed Customer Complaint Log and all relevant documentation is sent to the CEO for monitoring and record keeping.