Complaints Policy

Last Review: September 2023

Next Review: September 2024

The following policy aims to outline our approach to complaints about our staff and work from someone outside of the organisation.

About Hospice UK and our staff

However diligent and skilful our staff are, there may be times when the expectations of our members, supporters or others have not been met and they wish to voice their dissatisfaction.

Hospice UK is committed to an honest and thorough approach to complaints about our work and staff and using the information gained to help bring about improvements across all areas of our work.

This policy seeks to ensure that all complaints made are handled without delay and in a fair and open way for all those concerned.

Our approach

Hospice UK believes that having a robust complaints policy in place will:

1. Strengthen our capacity to deliver on our charitable objectives
2. Build the trust of our beneficiaries, stakeholders and the wider public.
3. Empower beneficiaries and supporters by instilling confidence in them and giving them opportunity to feedback on the way it operates.
4. Enables Hospice UK to show that it is focused on stakeholder needs.
5. Enable the charity to demonstrate that it has an open, fair and honest approach and that any problems or concerns are addressed.
6. Help measure the quality of our support and give Trustees and staff an opportunity to monitor and improve them.
7. Help find ways of being more responsive to unmet needs.
8. Enhance the charity’s reputation by helping communication, helping to foster a good reputation and confirming the charity’s commitment to excellence.

In responding to any complaints Hospice UK will:

- Listen to views when they arise and deal with complaints in an open and honest way.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of our policy and the process to follow if a complaint is made.
- Try to reach a mutually acceptable resolution wherever possible.

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1 The policy for making a complaint by a member of staff or volunteer of Hospice UK is covered in the ‘Whistleblowing’ policy
• Identify lessons learned to enable improvement.

In all aspects of our approach we will only respond and investigate a complaint when the complainant is identifiable. Anonymous complaints cannot be acted upon.

What is a complaint?

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is an issue or concern raised and fed back to us by an outside party about our actions, programmes or staff behaviours.

Where there is any uncertainty as to whether feedback is a complaint, this policy is to be followed anyway.

A complaint by a member of staff or volunteer of Hospice UK is managed through the ‘Whistleblowing’ policy which includes details of the identified whistleblowing lead and freedom to speak up lead.

Lead

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is the designated lead for complaints about Hospice UK – our work, actions and staff.

Procedure

1. When a complaint about Hospice UK and our staff is received, by any means – email, phone, letter, conversation - a holding response is to be made and the COO alerted
2. An investigation is to be undertaken with the lead for this agreed with the COO before any action taken
3. The designated lead to be responsible for all communication with the complainant at all stages of investigation and resolution and liaison with COO.

Where the complaint is judged to be serious / significant enough and the organisation is at risk, the Chief Executive is to be alerted who will alert the Board on the nature of the complaint and approve the planned approach and communication. Legal advice is to be sought at any stage if deemed appropriate.

In the absence of the COO, or if the complaint relates to the actions or behaviours of the COO, the lead for any complaint is to be the Chief Executive who will delegate investigation to another member of the senior leadership team where appropriate.

Time limits

Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the event to which they relate. Noting that a complaint that relates to an event of more than 12 months ago cannot be investigated properly and resolution may prove difficult.

The organisation commits to:

1. Sending a holding reply as soon as possible after the complaint is received acknowledging receipt and confirming that the matter will be investigated.
2. Appointing a lead within 7 working days to take forward the investigation.
3. Regular communication with the complainant to advise them of progress.
4. Feeding back results of investigation within 21 working days of complaint being received
5. Agreeing next steps if resolution not acceptable to complainant
6. Collating feedback and reporting regularly to the Board of any complaints made about Hospice UK and the team.

Complaints and disciplinary procedures
The complaints and disciplinary policies and procedures are separate. If a complaint investigation indicates a need for:

- An investigation under the disciplinary procedure
- Referral to one of the professional regulatory bodies
- A serious untoward incident investigation; or
- An investigation of a criminal offence

It should be passed immediately to the Chief Executive. If a decision is taken to embark upon any of these investigations, any other aspects of the complaint may still be investigated under this complaints procedure.

The complainant should be advised of the procedure being followed and any appeal process as outlined below.

Appeal Process - Trustee Review
If a complainant is not satisfied with the response received to their original complaint, an internal Trustee Review may be initiated.

Where a complainant indicates dissatisfaction with the outcome of any investigation, they can be invited to set out in writing details of why they disagree with the response received – ideally within two weeks of the response being received. This report is to be reviewed by the Chair of the Board and a Board Committee appointed to undertake a review of the investigation and outcome.

The purpose of this Trustee Review will be to establish whether the complaint has been properly investigated and answered with a view to mediation/conciliation.

Complaints monitoring
1. A report of complaints about Hospice UK staff is to be considered at each meeting of the People Committee.
2. A report about Hospice UK actions and programmes is to be reviewed by the Governance Committee.
3. A report of complaints to be reviewed at every Board meeting.

Noting that:

- Any lessons learned, changes to policies or procedures or potential service improvements as a result of a complaint will be discussed and actioned as appropriate.
• Continued complaints from persistent complainants are to be reported to the Board and responding action agreed.
• If the complainant remains dissatisfied following a Trustee Review they are to be signposted to the Charity Commission or Fundraising Standards Board.