

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

A complaint or adverse comment can be made verbally (in person or by phone) or in writing (in a letter, in an email, on a form, or through third party website such as CQC).

1. How to complain

- 1.1 Our information, 'How to Make a Complaint', is available to all our users from the outset of their treatment as part of their induction to the service. This information will also be available on the Hospice website, at the Hospice reception, and in the Hospice retail outlets.

Complainants with additional needs will be supported to make their complaint as appropriate, for example by an interpreter or an advocate.

2. Verbal complaints

- 2.1 Verbal complaints should be recorded on the Verbal Complaints Form. If the Form is not available, the following details should be captured:

- Date the complaint was received
- Who it was received by
- Name or person making the complaint and contact details (if applicable)
- The nature of the complaint
- The resolution being suggested.
- The response given
- Whether or not the complainant was satisfied with the response
- Details of any further action required.

Any member of staff receiving a verbal complaint should make every attempt to resolve the complaint in the most sympathetic and effective way possible, involving their line manager immediately if they do not have the authority or the resources to provide a resolution.

- 2.2 The Form (or the details above) should be forwarded to the Chief Executive for review.
- 2.3 The Chief Executive will keep a record of complaints, their resulting actions, and responses.

3. Written complaints

- 3.1 Anyone who has received a service from the Hospice may make a complaint. This is not limited to patients, carers or relatives but includes participants at fundraising events, donors and customers at our retail outlets.
- 3.2 All written complaints should be passed immediately to the Chief Executive (or, in their absence, the Deputy Chief Executive).
- 3.3 The Chief Executive will appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate the complaint and agree a timescale for the investigation to be completed. The investigation will normally be concluded within 20 working days.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days. This letter of acknowledgement will include a copy of the Complaints Procedure and details of who has been appointed to investigate the complaint and the intended timescale for the investigation and response.
- 3.5 The Investigating Officer will then conduct an investigation that is proportionate but sufficiently thorough with the progress of the Investigation being recorded on the Written Complaint Recording Pro-forma. If it is not clear from the original complaint what resolution is required, the Investigating Officer will normally contact the complainant to establish this. The Investigating Officer will liaise with the HR Manager or Senior Management Team to ensure that any staff or volunteers who are the subject of a complaint are properly supported. The Investigating Officer will normally make contact with the complainant to discuss their complaint and to keep them up to date with the progress of the investigation.
- 3.6 A formal response will be made to the complainant within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, an interim letter will be sent to the complainant explaining the reason(s) for the delay and giving a revised timescale. This 20-working day timescale is to be viewed as a maximum, and every effort should be made to respond as quickly as reasonably possible.

4. Support

- 4.1 Complainants may have difficulty in expressing themselves and may feel intimidated by the prospect of making a complaint to the Hospice or about a professional. Members of staff should be aware of these potential difficulties and offer appropriate support.

5. Appeal

- 5.1 If a complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, they will be able to make an appeal in writing to the Chair of the Board within three months of the date of the formal response. This appeal should detail why they are dissatisfied with the investigation of the complaint and/or the outcome of the investigation.
- 5.2 The Chair of the Board of Trustees (or the Vice-Chair in their absence) will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within three working days of receipt and will make a final response on behalf of the Board within 20 working days of the receipt of the appeal.
- 5.3 In the response to the appeal, the complainant will be advised that, if they remain dissatisfied, they can contact either the Care Quality Commission, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), or the Ombudsman. For data handling related complaints, the complainant will be directed to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

6. Governance

- 6.1 The Verbal Complaints Forms and the Written Complaint Recording Pro-forma will be held in the Complaints Register.
- 6.2 The Chief Executive will report to the Board and its Committees any complaints received in the quarter preceding the meeting.
- 6.3 The Board will publish information about complaints received in the annual Quality Account and will inform the Care Quality Commission and, if appropriate, the Charity Commission and Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) about complaints received.
- 6.4 The Hospice's insurers should be notified in advance where there may be a likelihood of litigation.

7. Legal Matters

- 7.1 All direct communication with the complainant will cease if the complainant explicitly indicates that it is their intention to take legal action in respect of their complaint, or if there seems to be a significant likelihood of litigation, until advice has been sought from the Hospice's legal advisers.
- 7.2 Where allegations may constitute a criminal offence the Chief Executive will notify the police.

8. Complaints about the Chief Executive

- 8.1 Where a complaint is made about the Chief Executive (either verbally or in writing) this procedure will be followed but the role ordinarily played by the Chief Executive will be played by the Vice-Chair.

9. Associated Documents

External documents

Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) 2014 regulations.

CQC guidance on providers meeting Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) 2014 regulations (2015) updated 2025.

NHS Constitution

Data Use and Access Act (2025) – data related complaints handling.

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) – data handling complaints advice.

Hospice Policies

Complaints

Information Governance

Raising Concerns at Work

Grievance

Safeguarding Adults

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Incident Management

Hospice Documents

Complaints Leaflet

Verbal Complaints Form

Written Complaint Recording Proforma

Complaints Register

Procedure

Date of first approval

Date of previous review

Date of last review

Start of next review:

Complaints Procedure

June 2015 (v1)

January 2024 (v3)

January 2026 (v4) Minor

September 2026