

Complaints and feedback policy

Purpose

This document describes for all parties concerned Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire's policy and procedures for dealing with complaints.

Scope

This policy applies to any individual or organisation – including users of services, volunteers, statutory bodies or voluntary organisations – that interacts with Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire and wishes to make a complaint or offer feedback. Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire's approach to responding to complaints or feedback as set out in this policy is applicable to all Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire's trustees, employees and volunteers.

Responsibilities

- Contract Development Officer: policy owner
 - Board of Trustees: overall responsibility for ensuring that high-quality services are delivered in accordance with agreed standards and that feedback is sought and responded to.
 - Chief Executive: overall responsibility for policy implementation.
 - All staff and volunteers: facilitate collection and investigation of complaints and feedback.
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Policy statement

Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire is committed to providing a range of high-quality services to individuals and to voluntary and community organisations in Northamptonshire.

We value feedback both positive and negative on all aspects of our policies, work and services because we see this as important information to use to develop and change the way we do things. Positive feedback shows when we are doing things well and negative feedback can show where we are falling short of meeting needs.

We recognise that sometimes people may feel that the service they have received from us, or tried to receive from us, is unsatisfactory. If anyone is unhappy they have the right to complain, either formally or informally.

Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire takes complaints seriously. Each complaint is treated equally, will be investigated, and dealt with sensitively. Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire will respond to complaints quickly.

Eligibility

Anyone using or trying to use Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire's services can make a complaint. This includes potential, current and past users of the services, volunteers, community and voluntary organisations, statutory bodies, etc.

However, Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire does not respond to anonymous or abusive complaints.

Procedures

Informal Complaints

Informal complaints are usually verbal complaints made by phone or face-to-face, but can be made via email or letter. It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved at this level.

Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire will try to resolve informal complaints by talking to or meeting with the complainant to listen to and respond to the concerns raised. This will be the responsibility of the most appropriate worker or manager for the particular complaint. On some occasions further investigation will be needed. If this is the case the complainant will be informed of the timescales involved before the outcome is fed back to the complainant. This should not take longer than 3 weeks unless there are specific circumstances, which delay investigation.

You should always inform your manager of all informal complaints you receive and refer complaints to your manager when appropriate. A record should be kept of the complaints received using the Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire Complaints Record Form (located in the Documents drive in the 'Compliments and Complaints' folder), for discussion at Team meetings and other meetings as appropriate. All records must have date and time.

Staff should ensure that a complaint record form is completed and filed confidentially in the executive support office. This will hold details of what the complaint was and how it was resolved. These records are kept in order to help the organisation learn from complaints.

At any point in this process the complainant can make a formal written complaint.

Formal Complaints

Formal complaints should be written down in detail. If a complainant wishes to make a formal complaint you should advise them of the complaints policy and ask them to write to the Chief Executive of Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. If the complainant does not feel able to write such a letter for whatever reason you should ask them if they wish to make a formal complaint and make written notes of the conversation/ complaint on the Complaints Record Form, including the complainant's name address and telephone number.

Thank the complainant for drawing the matter to our attention and promise an acknowledgement of complaint. Pass the information to the Chief Executive, who will write to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the complaint, and promise to investigate.

A letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint and advising of timescales for investigation and response will be sent to the complainant within 7 days.

The Chief Executive will investigate the complaint. If this is not appropriate because the Chief Executive is involved in the matters being investigated a representative from the Trustee Board will be called to lead the investigation.

A response will normally be made within 3 weeks unless there are specific circumstances, which delay or cause a longer investigation.

The Chief Executive or Trustee Board member will send a response to the Complainant.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response to their complaint they can write to the Chair of the Trustee Board outlining their concerns. If the complainant does not feel able to write down their concerns a member of staff can help with this.

The Chair will carry out further investigation or make a final response as appropriate.

Formal complaints and their outcomes should also be summarised on the Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire complaint record form and stored appropriately.

How Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire learns from complaints and compliments

Issues raised through complaints and comments to Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire are discussed at an operational level in staff meetings so that they can inform practice.

The Trustee Board is informed of all complaints and compliments received.

Feeding back on Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire services

Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire has in place a number of ways for users of our services to provide feedback (both positive and negative):

- Letting service users know they can raise issues with members of staff
- Periodic surveys and feedback forms.

The information gained is used in discussions around service delivery and planning.

Volunteers

Volunteers should not be expected to deal with either informal or formal complaints. If a service user (an individual or a group) speaks to a volunteer with a comment or complaint about the service the volunteer should direct them to the member of staff supervising them.

Volunteers should acknowledge the complaint or concern and take it seriously but recognise that responsibility for dealing with complaints lies with members of staff.

Staff

Staff members are expected to acknowledge any complaints or concerns and take them seriously.

Complaints should not be seen as a threat and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire should not appear to be defensive.

Staff should refer the complainant to the most relevant member of staff if possible. However, if this staff member is not available they should listen to the complaint, give the complainant details of the complaints policy and make a record of the complaint and take the contact details of the person making it. Complaints should be recorded on the Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire Complaints record form, which are filed confidentially

in the executive support office when the complaint is concluded. These records are kept to help Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire learn from complaints.

If the complaint relates to you or to work you are involved in advise the complainant that you are not the most appropriate person to deal with it. Tell them who is and either get your manager or arrange for your manager to contact the complainant.

Monitoring and reporting

A log sheet is located in Documents\Compliments and complaints for recording complaints and compliments. Details of individual complaints will be recorded on the Complaints Record Sheet which may be found in the same folder. These will be reported on quarterly.

Additional information

- Please see VIN's Customer Care Policy
- Complaints record sheet
- Complaints and compliments log sheet.

Policy waivers

If, for exceptional reasons, it is not possible to adhere to this policy, a waiver must be requested by submitting a policy waiver form to the Chief Executive for consideration. Any waivers must be carefully documented.

Version control

Version no.	Changes	Updated by	Approved by	Release date	Review due
4.0	Minor updates and re-formatting	M Keyes	CEO Approved	Oct 2017	Oct 2018