

Developing Health & Independence Complaints Policy and Procedure

Implementation Date	August 2000	Date of Next Review	November 2020
Date of Last Review	November 2018	Review Frequency	Two yearly
Reviewers Name	David Walton Housing Director		
Related Policies and Procedures	Grievance Disciplinary Capability		
Equalities Impact Assessment	The changes to this policy have been reviewed by the Executive who do not consider it necessary to prepare a separate Equality Impact Assessment for the amendments made.		
Information Governance Assessment	The changes to this policy have been reviewed by the Executive who do not consider it necessary to prepare a separate Information Governance Assessment for the amendments made.		

This policy covers all those who are working with or for DHI including, but not limited to, paid employees, volunteers, peers and contractors. For simplicity, these individuals are referred to throughout this policy as 'staff', although this does not imply an employee/employer relationship.

1. Definition

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the actions or in actions of a worker or about the service provided, that requires a response. A complaint can be made by someone receiving a DHI service, their representative or a partner agency working with DHI. Volunteers should also use the complaints policy to raise any concerns about a paid DHI employee.

2. Our policy statement

DHI is committed to providing a quality service for its clients and working in an open and accountable way to build the trust and respect of all our stakeholders. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our clients and stakeholders, by responding positively and proportionately to complaints, by putting mistakes right and learning from them.

3. The aims of our policy

We aim to ensure that:

- A culture exists so that expressing dissatisfaction constructively is something service users feel confident about, and are positively encouraged to do, such that formal complaints are rarely felt necessary.
- Making a complaint is as easy as possible, and policies and procedures are well publicised throughout the organisation.
- Complainants are reassured that making a complaint will not harm their future relations with us.
- All complaints are treated seriously, as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service.
- We deal with complaints politely and within agreed timescales laid down in the procedure.
- Where complaints are escalated to the formal stages, we will investigate and respond with a written explanation of the outcome.
- We learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review our complaints policy bi annually.

4. Responsibility

It is the responsibility of all staff to support clients in making a complaint, and to attempt to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage, preferably before recourse to formal complaints procedures becomes necessary. Dependant on the stage of the complaint it is the responsibility of the relevant worker, director or the Chief Executive to respond either verbally or in writing.

5. Monitoring

Complaints escalated to the formal stage will be monitored to ensure our publicised timescales for response are adhered to. We will identify repeated areas of concern and common themes that require actions to be taken, producing an annual report that will be presented to the Board.

The Complaints Procedure:

1.0 Introduction:

DHI staff should refer to this procedure where any service user or agency contacts them with a complaint about DHI or its services.

1. Escalation:

2.0 Escalation:

There are 4 stages to DHI's complaints procedure:

Informal stage	The member of staff who provided the service should seek to explore the reasons for the complaint and find an informal resolution. They must keep notes which clearly outline the reasons for the dissatisfaction and the steps taken to resolve this on the case file. They should seek management support and advice as appropriate.
Stage 1:	<p>If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution suggested at the informal stage, the person taking the complaint must make a clear record and email this to the PA to the chief executive.</p> <p>The PA will log the complaint on DHI's central log and allocate it to the line manager of the person about whom the complaint centres. Where the complaint is about the service, it will be sent to the service manager. Where the complaint is about the CEO, it will be sent to the board of trustees.</p> <p>The person to whom the complaint is allocated must investigate the complaint as appropriate and respond in the timescales outlined below using DHI's standard outcome letter. They must send a copy of the outcome letter to the PA.</p>
Stage 2:	<p>If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the stage 1 complaint they may escalate it to stage two of the process by contacting the PA within 10 working days of receiving the response.</p> <p>After receiving a stage 2 complaint the PA will log this on the central log. They will allocate the complaint and send all relevant paperwork to a more senior manager in the organisation.</p> <p>The person to whom the complaint is allocated must investigate the complaint as appropriate and respond in the timescales outlined below using DHI's standard outcome letter. They must send a copy of the outcome letter to the PA.</p>
Stage 3:	If the complainant remains dissatisfied by the outcome of the complaint, they may contact the relevant commissioning body for the service in question.

3.0 Investigating the complaint:

The investigation should be thorough but proportionate to the complaint. This may include meeting with the complainant, clarifying what resolution might look like to the complainant, reviewing case files, relevant policies and procedures and interviewing witnesses as appropriate. The purpose of these investigations is to gain all of the relevant facts so that a fair and informed decision can be made about the best resolution and next steps. An investigating manager will be appointed in all cases and they will be responsible for completing the investigation and writing to the complainant with their findings.

4.0 Outcomes:

There can be 3 outcomes to a complaint:

1. **Upheld:** The investigating manager feels that there were legitimate grounds for all aspects of the complaint.
2. **Partially Upheld:** The investigating manager feels that there were legitimate grounds for some aspects of the complaint.
3. **Not Upheld:** The investigating manager feels that there were no legitimate grounds for the complaint.

Wherever a complaint is Upheld or Partially Upheld the investigating manager must consider what can be done to prevent a similar complaint from reoccurring. In certain situations they will also need to consider whether further action is required in respect of DHI’s disciplinary or capability policy,

5.0 Time frame for responses:

- a) **Acknowledgement:** The complaint must be acknowledged in writing by the investigating manager within 2 days of the complaint being allocated by the PA and a date agreed for an interview with the complainant where appropriate.
- b) **Decision:** The investigation must be completed, and a decision made within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged. The investigating manager should forward the outcome letter and all other paperwork to the PA at this time. The relevant template letter should be used in all cases.

Appendix 1: Summary of Timelines

Stage/Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Informal	Client’s worker.	As quickly as practical.
Stage 1: acknowledge receipt of complaint	PA to CEO	2 working days.

Stage 1: interview with complainant to discuss the complaint	PA to CEO to allocate to appropriate investigator	2 working days. At this point the investigating manager will agree a reasonable timescale in which a thorough and proportionate investigation can be completed.
Stage 1: written response to the complaint	Investigating Manager	As soon as practicable and within agreed timescales.
Stage 1: escalate to Stage 2 for review.	Complainant	Within 10 working days of receiving the stage 1 complaint.
Stage 2: acknowledgment of the Stage 2 escalation.	PA to CEO	2 working days.
Stage 2: written response to complaint	Investigating Manager	As soon as practicable and within agreed timescales.