



CLIENT COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY

Policy Context

E.A.S.E (Empowering Action & Social Esteem) Ltd is committed to developing a strong sense of partnership with clients and other members of the local community. This provides a good basis for understanding and resolution when things appear to go wrong.

This policy describes the procedure to be followed when complaints are made by clients and others about the conduct of the EASE staff including volunteers or suppliers, or the actions of any member of staff.

Purpose of the Policy

We welcome our Clients, Partners and Visitors' views and will use them to improve our services.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for dealing with complaints, comments and compliments. It explains our processes and our obligations to our service users and partners.

Aims

EASE aims to provide excellent services to all our clients and partners, but occasionally things may go wrong. Complaints help us to put things right and make sure the same mistake does not happen again.

Our complaints policy aims to ensure that clients and partners:

- know where and how to complain and have easy access to our complaints system;
- receive an acknowledgement and information on the progress of their complaint; and
- receive an appropriate response with prompt and adequate action when we have failed to provide a satisfactory service.

We aim to ensure that most complaints are resolved quickly and smoothly and as close to the source of the misunderstanding or problem as soon as possible. In this way complainants can feel assured from the outset of a fair hearing, in line with a defined procedure for dealing with issues that have not immediately been resolved.

We aim to respond to client feedback in a consistent and professional manner, and use complaints to shape our services by providing regular reports about the complaints we receive.

We also hope that a staged framework might prevent an early and unnecessary escalation of the problem. In addition, we will ensure that lessons learned from the investigation of complaints will prove useful to improve the charities policy and practice. All complaints are reported to the Board of Trustees.

Definitions

- A complaint is... ... an expression of dissatisfaction about the charities action or lack of action, or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken by the charity itself or a person acting on behalf of the charity
- A comment is... a personal opinion or belief, feedback or remark expressed by an EASE service user or visitor. Where the EASE service User indicates they expect a reply, or where it is otherwise thought appropriate to do so, this should be dealt with as general correspondence.
- A compliment is... ...defined as a customer statement of positive recognition or praise for a service or individual.
- Where appropriate, the Managing Director may acknowledge compliments.

Our Complaints Procedure:

- Is simple to understand and use – with straightforward, well publicised stages;
- Encourages resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- Is easily accessible and publicised – with complainants knowing exactly where, how and to whom they should complain;
- Enables swift handling within established time-limits – with complaints being dealt with promptly, effectively and professionally within stated time limits at as early a stage as possible and with complainants being kept informed of progress;
- Enables effective action – with action being agreed and reviewed and complainants being kept informed of progress throughout each stage of the procedure;
- Is impartial, ensuring a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary – with an assurance that, beyond the first informal stage of investigation of a complaint against an individual, the subject of the complaint will not deal with it but will instead refer it to his or her line manager where appropriate;
- Is non-adversarial – with opportunities provided for resolution without conflict;
- Is confidential – with respect for people's desire for confidentiality;
- Addresses all the points at issue – with provision of an effective response;
- Provides information and enables development – ensuring that the organisation can learn from complaints and practice can be improved.

Procedure:

Those involved in the complaints process will ensure that it takes place in the context of the requirements of Child Protection, Special Educational Needs and other relevant procedures.

RESPONSE STANDARDS

We believe that most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily by informal discussion either over the telephone or through a meeting involving the key people involved.

We will normally acknowledge complaints **within five working days**. We will also normally provide a response or, if a lengthy investigation is involved, an update on progress, **within twenty working days**.

In the case of a lengthy investigation, complainants will be kept informed of progress.

The main aim throughout the procedure is to resolve the matter as quickly and effectively as possible, to everybody's satisfaction.

STAGE ONE: INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

- Clients and others should raise the informal complaints or concerns with any member of EASE – whoever is most appropriate and a complaints form be completed.
- The member of staff will endeavour to resolve the complaint in a professional manner, but if it cannot be resolved then a formal complaint should be made (in writing if possible) as outlined in Stage 2.
- If a client believes that the complaint or concern is serious or sensitive s/he should talk to Michelle Bailey, 020 85756139, who will investigate, and then report back either in writing or, more usually at this informal stage, through an interview with the complainant.
- Although clients are encouraged to raise their concerns/complaints with the session leaders, we recognise that they may, on occasion, bring their complaint to the attention of the Managing Director, Michelle Bailey by telephoning or writing to them. In such cases, EASE staff will work with the Managing Director in order to resolve the problem through the complaint's procedure, involving contact/discussion with the clients.
- All colleagues involved in informal complaints will keep written records, and will record the date on which the informal complaint was made. Full records will be kept by the Managing Director of formal complaints. All records will be kept in a locked file. Every effort will always be made to resolve the problem at this informal stage, including, where appropriate the offer of a conciliation meeting.
- Complainants who remain dissatisfied at this stage will be informed that they have the opportunity to make a formal complaint. In such cases, **complainants will be required to state clearly in writing that they are making a formal complaint.**

STAGE TWO: FORMAL COMPLAINTS

- When they express an interest in making a formal complaint, clients will be given a copy of the complaints policy and reminded of time scales for responding to complaints.
- Formal complaints should be made in writing, should state clearly that a formal complaint is being made and will normally be investigated, in the first instance, by the Session leader or Managing Director.
-

- If the complaint directly concerns the Session leader, however, complainants should contact the Managing Director, who will then work to investigate the complaint.
- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Session leader's response, s/he should contact the Managing Director
- The Managing Director will determine a method of further investigation and provide a formal response to the complainant.
- If a written complaint is received by the Managing Director, she will determine a suitable method of investigation. The complaint will then be dealt with following the complaints procedure.
- The complainant will receive a written response to his/her complaint. A meeting may also be arranged.
- Colleagues investigating complaints will not visit complainants' homes. Alternative neutral venues should be agreed.
- In some cases, a complaint may lead to disciplinary action against an individual, for which there are separate procedures. If this is the case the complainant will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action. The outcome of these procedures is confidential.

Complainants should normally receive a response to their formal complaint within **ten working days** of the receipt of that complaint.

The Session leader must make the Managing Director aware of all formal complaints that are service based, to allow for policy and procedural changes across all EASE activities to occur (all personnel issues must be handled through line management).

STAGE THREE: APPEAL

Any complaint of a discriminatory nature goes straight to this stage.

Once a complaint made about a service or member of staff reaches the Managing Director, within ten working days, the complaint will be investigated further.

This will then become a complaint at stage 3 of the procedure.

The Managing Director will personally investigate your complaint or appoint another officer who has not previously been involved, to investigate.

Within ten working days, we will send the complainant a full written reply, or let them know if our reply will take longer, explaining the reason for the delay.

If we do not hear from the complainant within twenty working days of our final reply, we will close the complaint.

STAGE FOUR: FINAL STAGE

If the complainant feels that their complaint has still not been resolved, they may write again, within ten working days of the reply, explaining why they are not yet satisfied. He/she will consider whether your complaint has already been dealt with properly, and if so, will write to let you know.

If not, a review panel will be set up to deal with your complaint. The panel will review the findings of the Managing Director and decide the next course of action.

Policy Implementation:

- A poster shall be displayed on EASE's notice boards to inform service users how they can make a complaint
- The Managing Director is responsible for the implementation of this policy and conducting regular reviews.
- All staff are made aware of this policy as part of their induction, reviews, and training.
- All clients are made aware of this policy and are encouraged to follow the guidelines.
- Partner agencies are made aware of this policy and support its implementation where appropriate

Where a complaint may arise about the Managing Director, Sharon Ali, Chair of Trustees must be informed on 07771614458.

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if an update is deemed necessary due to legislation or best practice

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Trustees on 6.7.22

Next policy review date 6.7.24