

Complaints Policy and procedure

Policy

Complaints, comments and suggestions from users offer an opportunity for Open Door to consider the services that it provides from the perspective of those who use them and thereby to improve those services. It is important to good governance and risk management that Open Door thoroughly investigates any complaints received, whilst being scrupulously fair to staff and takes any necessary remedial action. It is also essential that Open Door reviews its performance in handling any complaints received regularly.

The aim of the complaints procedure is to provide an explanation, or an apology or a framework for working towards a resolution where appropriate, and to identify any steps to be taken to prevent a recurrence.

To these ends:

- Arrangements for making complaints are well publicised to service users.
- All formal complaints are investigated and responded to in writing by the Director or a member of the Board of Trustees in timely fashion.
- The Board of Trustees is kept informed of all formal complaints and their resolution and the regular evaluation of the process.
- The Director keeps a Register of User Comments, Suggestions and Complaints.
- Staff induction includes training on complaints handling.

Procedure

1. Informal resolution

Any complaint, whether it concerns an administrative matter or therapy should initially, if at all possible, be taken up informally with the member of staff concerned. This may be with an administrator or with a therapist in a therapy session.

Clients in treatment making complaints to the Director will, unless there is good reason not to, be asked in the first place to take up the issue in the above way. The member of staff concerned will be informed that this has been done and be asked to notify the Director as to whether they believe the matter has been resolved informally.

Any member of staff receiving a complaint should listen carefully to what it is about and if it is within her/his ability to resolve it, take the necessary action. They should not dispute what the person is complaining about but remember that it is the complainant's perception of events and is valid as such. If the recipient staff member cannot resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction they should inform the complainant about the formal complaints procedure. They should also, as appropriate in the circumstances, either suggest that the complainant should take the matter up directly with the individual concerned or offer to pass details of the complaint to the Director. If the complainant accepts this offer the brief details passed to the Director should include, the name, address and phone number of the complainant, the time and date of any incident involved, the names of all other personnel involved and the main issues the complaint concerns. Such information should be treated in the strictest confidence. A complaint so passed to the Director becomes a formal complaint (see below).

Where a matter is resolved informally it is open to the complainant to request that a note of the complaint and its resolution is given to the Director by the member of staff concerned for inclusion in the centre's Register of User Comments, Suggestions and Complaints. Alternatively the member of staff concerned may decide of her/his own volition to pass such a note to the Director in the interest of informing management review.

2. Formal Complaints

If discussion with the person concerned is not feasible or does not resolve the matter, the following procedure may be used providing the complainant has not expressed an intention to make a legal claim.

The complainant should contact the Director with details of their complaint either in writing, by telephone or in person by appointment:

Julia Britton
12 Middle Lane
London
N8 8PL
Email: enquiries@opendooronline.org

The Director will investigate any complaint received and normally respond to the complainant in writing with a copy to the person(s) complained against and the Chair of Trustees within 14 days of Open Door first receiving a formal complaint. If it is not possible to investigate and respond to a complaint within this time frame the Director will write to the complainant within this time to explain why and copy the letter to the Chair of Trustees:

Karen Simmons
12 Middle Lane
London
N8 8PL

A full response copied to the person(s) complained against and the Chair of Trustees will then be sent to the complainant as soon as is reasonably practicable.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied, s/he may request his/her complaint to be referred to a previously uninvolved member of the Governing body who will review the complaint and its handling. Such a request must be made in writing to the Director within 28 days of receipt of the Director's response. That member of the Governing body will either refer the complaint back to the Director for further action towards a resolution or inform the complainant that nothing more can be done by the organisation to satisfy him/her or set up a complaints panel which will consist of the following:

- A Chair, (member of Open Door's Board of Trustees not previously involved)
- An Open Door consultant psychotherapist or an independent lay person with relevant experience in the subject matter of the complaint
- An independent senior psychotherapist or suitable independent lay person as appropriate not involved in the day to day work of Open Door invited to participate by the Board of Trustees

The member of the Governing body will inform all parties as to which course of action (s)he is following.

If a panel is convened, the panel will meet with the complainant and separately with the person or persons complained against or other personnel involved. At a meeting of the complaints panel, a non-legally qualified person may accompany each of complainant and person complained against. After hearing the complaint the panel may make such further investigations, as it feels necessary.

The panel will inform the complainant of its conclusions concerning the complainant in writing normally within 14 days of the hearing.

Should the complaint be against, or should it include, the Director of Open Door, The Chair of the Board of Trustees should be substituted for the Director in all the above paragraphs.