

Coventry Local Involvement Network (LINK) Comments Compliments and Complaints Policy

Scope

This policy sets out the process for dealing with comments and complaints from individuals or organisations about the work of Coventry LINK or the conduct of individual Member-Volunteers of Coventry LINK. All people actively involved in volunteering with Coventry LINK should abide by its policies and procedures and Code of Conduct.

Whilst Coventry LINK is happy to gather information relating to individual issues of complaint regarding health and social care services in Coventry in order to utilise this information to identify trends, LINK does not get involved in such complaints, therefore: this Policy does not cover:

- i. Complaints or concerns about the NHS, which should be dealt with through the NHS complaints procedure.
- ii. Complaints about the provision of social care services which should be dealt with by City Council Complaints procedures

The policy does not cover Complaints about the Host organisation or the LINK staff team it employs as these are dealt with through Voluntary Action Coventry's (VAC) own Comments, Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy.

Aims and Principles

A Comments

Coventry LINK welcomes compliments, comments and feedback on its work and will endeavour to put in place different feedback mechanisms for example self completion feedback forms at meetings and events. The LINK Host organisation will keep records of the feedback received. This will be reported back to the LINK Steering Group in order to feed into the design of future activity.

Staff and volunteers will be encouraged to record comments received verbally or via fax or email, where possible noting the name of the originator, organisation (if relevant), date and comment made.

B Complaints

The Coventry LINK aims to:

- i. Deal with complaints efficiently and fairly
- ii. Keep complainants fully informed of progress with their complaint
- iii. Achieve a resolution which is satisfactory to both the complainant and the LINK.

Coventry LINK is committed to the principle of openness and as such will acknowledge when a mistake has been made.

Complaints can be a valuable source of information. The Coventry LINK will do its best to use the principles derived from complaints as a tool to improve practices.

All complaints will be treated as confidential. This means that the complaint will be seen only by the people who are directly involved in processing, handling and responding to the complaint except in exceptional circumstances (the person is at risk of serious harm, intending to harm others or intending to carry out a serious crime).

The stages of the complaints process:

Informal resolution

Where possible complainants will be encouraged to discuss their concerns as soon as an issue arises with the LINK Project Manager, or if this is not appropriate with the Director of Policy and Partnerships at Voluntary Action Coventry. All complaints resolved through informal discussion will be recorded in the Comments, Compliments and Complaints book, indicating the date, nature of complaint and any action undertaken.

Formal resolution

- i. If a complainant wishes to make a formal complaint they will be asked to write to the LINK Project Manager at the Host organisation Voluntary Action Coventry explaining the nature of the concern. If a complainant is unable to write to the LINK other arrangements, for example receiving the complaint over the telephone, will be made to help equality of access to the complaints process. A telephone complaint will be confirmed back to its originator in writing to check and verify that the information taken is accurate before the complaint can be investigated
- ii. When a complaint is received it will be logged by the Host organisation. This data will be handled in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- iii. The Host organisation will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 working days
- iv. A meeting will take place with the complainant and be chaired and minuted by appropriate/nominated participants in order to investigate and resolve the complaint and endeavour to respond to it within 20 working days. If a response within this timescale is not possible, an explanation of why this is not possible will be given. Notification of the decision will be sent by post.
- v. If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of his or her complaint they may appeal to the LINK Steering Group. Appeals should be lodged within 30 working days. On receiving the appeal the Steering Group will consider the appeal and endeavour to respond within 20 working days.

Appendix 1: Additional advice when making a complaint

When making a complaint by letter, you should include:

- i. Your name and contact details
- ii. Who or what has caused your concerns
- iii. When and where the event happened
- iv. What results you would like to have.

You also should keep a record of:

- i. Telephone calls related to the complaint. Who you spoke to, when and what the calls were about
- ii. All your papers and correspondence relating to the complaint
- iii. Details of any visits or meetings.

Appendix 2: Persistent Complaints and Vexatious Behaviour from the Complainant

Introduction

The Steering Group will do everything reasonably possible to resolve issues of complaint. However, complainants occasionally may focus solely on their concerns to the extent of placing a strain on time and resources which hinder the consideration of their or other people's complaints.

Examples of circumstances which complaints may be considered persistent or vexatious:

Where complainants:

- Persist in pursuing a complaint where the complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented
- Persist in complaints, where the complaint has been thoroughly investigated, but the outcome of the investigation is not accepted
- Persist in complaints, where the expected outcome is unrealistic and the complainant intends to persist until such an outcome is achieved
- Change the substance of a complaint or continually raise new issues or seek to prolong contact by continually raising further concerns or questions upon receipt of a response whilst the complaint is being addressed. (Care must be taken not to discard new issues that are significantly different from the original complaint. These might have to be addressed separately)
- Are unwilling to accept documented evidence of treatment given as being factual, or deny receipt of an adequate response in spite of correspondence specifically answering their questions
- Do not clearly identify the precise issues they wish to be investigated, despite reasonable efforts by the Steering Group or Host staff and others to help them specify their concerns
- Where the individual will not accept that the Coventry LINK does not have a role in investigating their issue e.g. they have not exhausted local processes and wish the Coventry LINK to intervene inappropriately.
- Focus on a trivial matter to an extent that is out of proportion to its significance and continue to focus on this point
- Have, in the course of pursuing their issue, had an excessive number of contacts or that the frequency of contact is often lengthy and complicated (by

telephone, e-mail letter or fax) placing unreasonable and disproportionate demands on the LINK Steering Group or Host staff.

- Display unreasonable demands or expectations and fail to accept these may be unreasonable e.g. insist on immediate responses from the Coventry LINK or Host staff when they are not available and this has been explained.
- Have threatened or used actual physical violence. All such cases must be documented in case of further action and reported.
- Have harassed or been personally abusive or verbally aggressive towards LINK Steering Group members or Host staff dealing with them. All cases must be documented and reported in case of further action. It is recognised, however, that complainants may sometimes act out of character at times of stress, anxiety, or distress and reasonable allowances for this should be made.

Procedure

If during the course of Stage 2 of the complaints policy the Project Manager and Steering Group agree that the complaint should now be defined in one of the categories listed above a letter can be sent to the complainant explaining that the investigation has ended.

All complaints and queries and other correspondence regarding a particular complaint must be passed to the LINK Project Manager. This will not only ensure a consistent approach by the Coventry LINK but will also minimise the possibility of confusion resulting in conflicting responses being given to the complainant. It will also result in the complainants being dealt with in a coordinated way irrespective of the route the complainant takes.