

1625 INDEPENDENT PEOPLE

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. PURPOSE OF OUR COMPLAINTS POLICY	2
3. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?.....	2
4. HOW WE WILL DEAL WITH A COMPLAINT	2
5. WHEN WE CAN NOT DEAL WITH A COMPLAINT	3
6. INVOLVING SERVICE USERS	4
7. SERVICE USER CARE AND ACCESS	4
8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	4
9. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW	5

1. INTRODUCTION

1625 Independent People (1625ip) are committed to providing an excellent service. We believe that service user satisfaction and feedback key to delivering excellent services.

We treat all complaints seriously. Where our services fall short of our high standards and what you expect, we will investigate and put it right. We will learn from complaints and use this learning to improve our services for the future.

Independent People will ensure that we never treat any service user who makes a complaint in a negative or adverse way, because of making a complaint.

Independent People welcome complaints and see them as a useful way to help improve what we do.

2. PURPOSE OF OUR COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy and procedure will enable us to:

- Accept complaints in any format; email, fax, in person, telephone etc.
- Respond to complaints fairly and objectively
- Reflect our aim of providing an excellent service
- Empower staff through training to view complaints in a positive way
- Use feedback from service users, stakeholders and any other person making a complaint to improve services and business planning
- Respond to complaints appropriately taking into account the needs of the person making the complaint, whether they are a service user, advocate, stakeholder or member of the public

3. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction by a service user, advocate, stakeholder or member of the public, about our service, or action that we have or have not taken.

A **request for action** is not a complaint and will be dealt with by the relevant staff member. An example of this may be a request for a repair to a property, or a report from a neighbour about Anti Social Behaviour.

An **enquiry is** when we are contacted for information, for example a request by a service user for a balance on their rent account. Or another agency wanting to refer a potential service user.

4. HOW WE WILL DEAL WITH A COMPLAINT

Making a complaint

All complaints and subsequent appeals are recorded in writing. However the person making a complaint does not need to put the complaint in writing as support will always be made available by a member of Independent People staff to write up a complaint. At the start of any complaint staff will ensure that any specific needs or preferences of those making a complaint are identified, for example in relation:

- disability and any adjustments required
- gender of the investigating manager
- translation services and interpreting services
- providing information in appropriate formats.

What happens next?

Once the complaint has been received this will be acknowledged by the relevant Service Manager within 2 working days of receipt.

A full written response will be made to address the complaint by the Service Manager within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint being received.

Following receipt of the response the person making the complaint, has 10 working days to appeal against the complaint if they are not satisfied with the outcome that they have received.

This appeal will be acknowledged the Operations Director or Service Improvement Director within 3 working days of receipt.

A full written response will be made to address the appeal within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.

Should the person making the complaint still not be satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they will be informed of the process to bring the matter forward to the Board of Independent People.

If the person making the complaint is still not satisfied, we will advise them of any relevant bodies which can independently hear the complaint, for example the Housing Ombudsman, Local Government Ombudsman, Council or funder of the service.

Support and advice with complaints

Throughout the entire process the person making the complaint will be given contact details on any organisations that may be able to assist them and advocate on their behalf, for example Citizens Advice Bureau, Shelter, South West Law.

Service users who make a complaint have the right to be accompanied at meetings at any stage of a complaint, by a friend, relative or advocate.

We will make every effort to ensure that meetings in relation to complaints are arranged at a time that is mutually convenient for all in relation to time and venue, and at venues that are fully accessible for those attending.

Independent People will provide reasonable carers costs for those with children or other dependants when this is needed to attend complaint meetings

5. WHEN WE CAN NOT DEAL WITH A COMPLAINT

Independent People are dedicated to ensure that everyone who comes into contact with our organisation and services are fully satisfied with their experience. However

there are some situations that are beyond our control and where the complaints procedure may not be able to provide a resolution.

Examples may include:

- Persons or bodies over which we have no control
- The general law, e.g. appeals against court rulings such as possession orders
- Against a refusal to allocate a service where a person is not eligible

6. INVOLVING SERVICE USERS

Service users have been involved in the review of this policy through our service user forum.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, which will include consultation with service users, staff and the board.

7. SERVICE USER CARE AND ACCESS

We will make sure that our complaints policy and procedure are easy to access and well publicised.

A summary of this policy will be available to all service users at start of support through the Young People's Handbook, and the policy will be explained to all service users at start of service. Details of how to make a complaint are on our website.

We aim to provide high standards of complaint handling through training and empowering all staff.

We will do all we can to use the feedback received, to learn and make changes to improve our services.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

We will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently.

We will ensure that we never treat any service user who makes a complaint in a negative or adverse way, because of making a complaint.

We will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people in accordance with our equality and diversity policy.

We will monitor who is using this policy and compare this to the current community of our service users so that we can further improve our services.

Any monitoring information will be used to improve our services to and ensure that all of our service users can access our complaints policy and procedure. This information will in no way be used to influence individual complaints.

We will act sensitively towards needs of service users and the community.

We will take positive action to reduce discrimination and harassment.

If a service user is unable to read this policy we are happy to read it to them. This policy is available on request in other formats (for example in an alternative language, in Braille, CD, or in large type).

9. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

The relevant Operations Directors and Partnership Director will monitor the effectiveness of this policy, taking into account service user and staff feedback.

A Complaints Log will be maintained and include the date and time of complaint, name and address of service user; name and address of complainant (if different), nature of the complaint, action taken, and the date action was taken and remedy completed.

We will inform service users how we use complaints to improve our services and publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints.

The policy will be reviewed annually to look at ways in which it can be improved. If you have any concerns on the effectiveness of this policy, please report this to the Partnership Director.

We will also complete a report on an annual basis of the nature of all complaints and their outcomes in order that this may be used to improve services and feed into service and staff development. This annual report will be scrutinised by the Board.