



Policy on Managing Complaints

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| Developed By: Mary McMahon, Director of Administration. | | Approved By: Dara Community Living Board of Directors Policy Sub Committee: Mary McMahon |
| Dates Reviewed: February 2011, February 2013, February 2015, March 2018 | | Next Review Date: February 2020 |
| Document No: 12 | Version No: 5 | No of Pages: 9 |
| Responsible people for implementation: All Employees, Management Team, Volunteers, Chief Executive Officer. | | |

1.1 Background to this Policy

This policy was developed to meet Dara Community Living 'Dara' responsibility to ensure that people who use the service, their families and members of the public are aware of their right to make a complaint and their rights throughout the complaints management process.

This policy is developed in line with Your Service, Your Say The Policy for the Management of Consumer Feedback to include comments, compliments and complaints in the HSE.

Other Dara policies and procedures which are related to and compliment this policy are:

- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons at risk of abuse
- Protected Disclosure/Good Faith Reporting Policy
- Dignity at Work
- Grievance procedure
- Record Management Data Protection Policy

1.2 Aim of this Policy

The aim of this policy is to outline how people can make a complaint and to ensure that any complaints received are dealt with in a fair, transparent and appropriate way and resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant where possible.

The aim of this policy is to meet the requirements of relevant national policies, legislation and regulations at outlined in references section 1.6 of this document

Definition of a complaint

The Health Act 2004 states that a **Complaint** means a complaint made about any action of the Executive(HSE) or a Service Provider that, **it is claimed, does not accord with fair or sound administrative practice, and adversely affects the person by whom, or on whose behalf, the complaint is made.**

1.3 Scope of this Policy

This policy may be used by any person including a person who is being or was provided with a service from Dara or who has sought provision of such service.

The person may complain in accordance with the procedures established under this policy about any action of the Service that

- (a) it is claimed, does not accord with fair and sound administrative practice and (b) adversely affects or affected that person

An action does not accord with fair and sound administrative practice if it is:

- *taken without proper authority,*
- *taken on irrelevant grounds,*
- *the result of negligence or carelessness,*
- *based on erroneous or incomplete information,*
- *improperly discriminatory,*
- *based on undesirable administrative practice, or*
- *in any other respect contrary to fair or sound administration.*

All complaints will be received and considered by Dara however, the Health Act 2004 details a number of complaints that are not included under Part 9 of the Health Act. (Appendix 1)

Some concerns/complaints received will be addressed using other DARA policies as outlined below:

| Type of issue/concern/complaint | Policy to be used |
|---|--|
| • Allegation of abuse of an adult using Dara's services and supports | Safeguarding of Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse Policy |
| • Concerns/complaints | Managing Complaints Policy |
| • Complaints by staff of any inappropriate behaviour of other staff at work | Dignity at Work Policy |

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| • Grievances by staff related to terms and conditions /work practices | Grievance procedure |
| • Management of records and personal information. | Data Protection / Record Management Policy |

1.4 Policy Statements

1.4.1 General Policy

- 1.4.1.1. Dara commits to safeguarding the rights and dignity of people who use the service, their families and staff members in the implementation of this policy and associated supporting documents.
- 1.4.1.3 Complaints, criticisms or suggestions, whether oral or written will be taken seriously and handled appropriately and sensitively.
- 1.4.1.4 The complaints handling process will be implemented without fear, favour or prejudice towards the complainant, or the person or service about which the complaint was made.
- 1.4.1.5 Dara will communicate with the Complainant throughout the process and endeavour to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction as close to the point of contact as possible.
- 1.4.1.6 Dara has a designated Complaints Officer, the role of the Complaints Officer is to ensure complaints are appropriately managed. (see Appendix 3 for contact details)
- 1.4.1.7 All information obtained through the course of complaint management will be treated in a confidential manner and in line with current Data Protection and Freedom of information legislation. The complaints process will facilitate the gathering of essential and appropriate information to ensure the effective management of the complaint and the education of the organisation without compromising the rights of all parties involved.
- 1.4.1.8 Dara staff have an obligation to participate and support the investigation of any complaint where requested.
- 1.4.1.9 Dara commits to providing training to all staff to enable them to effectively implement the complaints management policy.
- 1.4.1.10 A copy of the complaints management policy will be published on the Dara website and a notice on how to make a complaint displayed in all service locations.

- 1.4.1.11 It is the responsibility of all staff in Dara to respond to and resolve complaints at the first point of contact wherever possible. Staff should use the Listen Approach outlined in Appendix 2 as appropriate.
- 1.4.1.12 The Team Leader will ensure complaints are reported in line with the process outlined in Section 2 of this policy.
- 1.4.1.13 Team Leaders will discuss repeated 'local resolution' complaints with their Line Manager to decide if the matter should be escalated to the Complaints Officer for further investigation/informal resolution.
- 1.4.1.14 The Complaints Officer will ensure all written complaints are managed within the agreed timeframes.
- 1.4.1.15 Dara will ensure that staff carrying out investigations have the appropriate training and experience.
- 1.4.1.16 Dara staff may use the Employee Assistance Programme as a support to deal with personal issues that arise as a result of their involvement in a complaint.

1.4.2 Making a Complaint

- 1.4.2.1. A complaint can be made in a number of ways including:
- In person
 - By telephone
 - By letter
 - By email
- 1.4.2.2. A complaint can be made to any staff member, manager or director of Dara.
- 1.4.2.3. If a complaint is being made about a particular person and the person's name is being given, the complaint must be written, giving details such as dates and locations so that the person dealing with the complaint can check the facts of the complaint.
- 1.4.2.4 A complaint must be made within 12 months of the date of the action giving rise to the complaint or within 12 months of the complainant becoming aware of the action giving rise to the complaint.
- 1.4.2.5 The Complaints Officer will determine if the complaint meets the time frames as set out in Section 47, Part 9 of the Health Act 2004. The Complaints Officer may extend the time limit for making a complaint if they are of the opinion that special circumstances make it appropriate to do so. These special circumstances include but are not exclusive to the following:
- If the complainant is ill or bereaved.

- If new relevant, significant and verifiable information relating to the action becomes available to the complainant.
- If it is considered in the public interest to investigate the complaint.
- If the complaint concerns an issue of such seriousness that it cannot be ignored.
- Diminished capacity of the service user at the time of the experience e.g. mental health, critical/long term illness.
- Where extensive support was required to make a complaint and this took longer than 12 months.

1.4.2.6 Where a complaint does not meet the time frame of 12 months the Complaints Officer will notify the complainant within 5 working days of the decision to extend/not extend time limits to accepting a complaint

1.4.3 Acknowledgement of a complaint

1.4.3.1 When a complaint has been received, Dara will endeavour to deal with the complaint effectively and efficiently. Complaints being dealt with formally will be acknowledged within 5 working days and will outline to the complainant the steps to be taken in investigating the complaint and the time limits for the completion of the investigation.

1.4.3.2 DARA will endeavour to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant in strict accordance with the process for managing complaints in DARA.

1.4.4. Stages of Managing a Complaint

There are 4 stages to Dara's Complaints process as follows:

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| 1 | Local Resolution | Verbal complaint resolved at point of contact |
| 2a | Informal Resolution | Written/Verbal complaint resolved through discussion |
| 2b | Formal investigation | Written complaint investigated and findings documented in a written report stating outcome i.e. Complaint Upheld/Partially upheld/Not Upheld |
| 3 | HSE Internal Review | Complainant not accepting the outcome of an Investigation can request that the HSE carry out an review of the procedures used to manage the complaint. |
| 4 | Independent Review | Complainant dissatisfied with outcome of HSE Internal Review, seeks a review by the Office for the Ombudsman/Ombudsman for Children |

- 1.4.4.1 Dara will make every effort to resolve verbal complaints at the point of contact. Where this is not possible DARA will seek the consent of the complainant to resolve it through informal resolution. This will involve:
- clarifying the complaint
 - informing all parties of their right to be accompanied by a support person/an advocate or a third party to any meeting/s held in relation to the complaint
 - meeting/s with the complainant giving them an opportunity to give their version of events and to provide evidence/explanations to verify the complaint.
 - meeting/s with other relevant parties giving them an opportunity to give their version of events and to provide evidence/explanations in relation to their actions.
 - confirming the outcomes/agreement reached in any discussion with the participants
 - giving the complainant the opportunity to identify what they would like to happen as a result of making the complaint.
 - managing the expectations of the complainant and being clear with complainant about what can and cannot be achieved through the investigation.
 - determining the sequence of events leading to the complaint and the root causes of the complaint.
 - ensuring any conclusions about the complaint are based on a logical flow to the evidence supporting the complaint.
 - affording the person concerned the opportunity to consider any adverse proposed findings or criticism and to make representations in relation to them.
- 1.4.4.2 Dara may offer Mediation by a mutually agreed 3rd party to attempt informal resolution of the complaint. Both the complainant and those to whom the complaint relates must agree to using Mediation.
- 1.4.4.3 Where a complaint cannot be resolved by Local/Informal Resolution the Complaints Officer will, if appropriate, set up a formal Investigation into the complaint,
- 1.4.4.4 When the investigation of the complaint is complete the Investigation Team will produce a written report which will include:
- Description of the complaint
 - Steps in the Investigation
 - Background to the Complaint/Sequence of events
 - Findings of the investigation i.e. the outcome of each element of the complaint and whether it is upheld/partially upheld or not upheld. Including an explanation of the judgement
 - Recommendations which they consider appropriate • Appendices as relevant e.g. Notes of Meetings, records etc.

- 1.4.4.5 The Complainant and others involved in the complaint will be given an opportunity to respond to the Investigation report before it is finalised.
- 1.4.4.6 If the complainant does not accept the findings in the Investigation Report, he/she may seek a review of the process used to manage the complaint by applying to the HSE Consumer Affairs within 30 days of the report being issued. (see Appendix 3 for contact details.)
- 1.4.4.7 The HSE may carry out a new investigation of the complaint or recommend that a local re-investigation of the complaint be carried out by a Complaint Officer independent of the initial investigation team. They will inform the Complainant of the outcome.
- 1.4.4.8 If the complainant does not accept the outcome of the HSE Internal review they may seek a review of the complaint by the Ombudsman/Ombudsman for Children. (see Appendix 3 for contact details)

1.4.5 Timeframes involved once a complaint is received by the Complaints Officer in Dara

- 1.4.5.1 Where the Complaints Officer determines that the complaint does not meet the criteria detailed in 1.3, the Complaints Officer will inform the complainant in writing, within 5 working days of making the decision/determination, that the complaint will not be investigated and the reasons for it.
- 1.4.5.2 Where the complaint will be investigated, the Complaints Officer must endeavour to have the investigation concluded within 30 working days of it being acknowledged.
- 1.4.5.3 Where the investigation cannot be investigated, and concluded within 30 working days then the Complaints Officer must communicate this to the complainant and the relevant service/staff member within 30 working days of acknowledging the complaint and give an indication of the time it will take to complete the investigation.
- 1.4.5.4 The Complaints Officer/Designate must update the complainant and the relevant staff/service member every 20 working days.
- 1.4.5.5 The Complaints Officer must endeavour to conclude the investigation within 30 working days. However, where the 30 working days' time frame cannot be met despite every best effort, the Complaints Officer must endeavour to conclude the investigation of the complaints within 6 months of the receipt of the complaint.
- 1.4.5.6 If this timeframe cannot be met, the Complaints Officer/Designate must inform the complainant that the investigation is taking longer than 6 months, give an explanation why and outline the options open to the complainant. He/she should encourage the complainant to stay with the DARA complaints management process while informing them that they may seek a review of their complaint by the HSE.

1.4.6. Vexatious, Malicious or Anonymous complaints

- 1.4.6.1 The complaints handling process will provide protection and support to a person or service where it is deemed that a complaint has been made without sufficient grounds or with the conscious desire to cause harm to that person or service.
- 1.4.6.2 Dara views the making of a malicious or vexatious complaint against any staff member with the utmost seriousness and any such complaints, found to be malicious or vexatious may be referred to the Garda Authority.
- 1.4.6.3 If a complaint is found to be vexatious or malicious DARA will not pursue the complaint any further.
- 1.4.6.4 Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated as there is there is always a possibility that they are vexatious or malicious and the anonymity of the complainant does not enable the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness to be upheld. In particular, anonymous complaints about an employee of DARA cannot be investigated as this is contrary to the rights of the employee concerned.
- 1.4.6.5 Complainants must provide contact details when making a complaint against DARA to enable appropriate validation and investigation of that complaint.
- 1.4.6.6 If a complainant makes a complaint in confidence, the identity of the complainant will only be known to the recipient of the complaint and the Complaints Officer, however in order to carry out a full and proper investigation of the complaint, the complainant may have to give consent to have their identity disclosed.
- 1.4.6.7 Details of anonymous complaints will be made available to relevant service managers for consideration as appropriate.

1.4.7 Advocacy

- 1.4.7.1 All complainants have a right to appoint an advocate to assist them in making their complaint and to support them in any subsequent processes in the management of that complaint.
- 1.4.7.2 Dara will support people who use the service who wish to make a complaint and who otherwise would find it difficult or impossible to make such a complaint themselves, to source appropriate advocacy services e.g. The National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (Telephone: 0761 07 3000.)

1.4.8. Redress

An effective complaints system which offers a range of timely and appropriate remedies will enhance the quality of service to people who use the service and their families. It will have a positive effect on staff morale and improve Dara's relations with the public. It will also provide useful feedback to Dara and enable it to review current processes and procedures which may be giving rise to complaints.

1.4.8.1 Redress will be consistent and fair for both the complainant and Dara.

1.4.8.2 Dara will offer forms of redress or responses that are appropriate and reasonable where it has been established that a measurable loss, detriment or disadvantage was suffered or sustained by the claimant personally. This redress could include:

- Apology
- An explanation
- Admission of fault
- Change of decision
- Correction of misleading or incorrect records
- Technical assistance
- Recommendation to make a change to a relevant policy or law

1.4.9 Learning from Complaints

1.4.9.1 Dara is committed to learning from complaints and will view each complaint as an opportunity for improvement.

1.4.9.2 Dara's Complaints Officer will monitor the complaints received and ensure that complaints are discussed at management meetings as appropriate for the purpose of learning and service improvement.

1.4.9.3 Dara will report complaints to the HSE as required in the Service Level Agreement.

1.4.10 Meeting Regulatory Requirements under Part 10 of Care and Support Regulations 2013 Complaints procedure

Dara provides a complaints procedure for persons supported in an accessible and age-appropriate format and this includes an appeals procedure,

Each person supported and their family aware of the complaints procedure a copy is provided along with the persons Terms and Conditions of residency

Where relevant the person will be provided with information on advocacy services for the purposes of making a complaint;

Dara displays a copy of the complaints procedure in a prominent position in each home and in the respite house.

Ms Mary McMahon is nominated as the Complaints Officer for Dara.

Resident, Respite and Advocacy meetings are used to inform persons of the complaints procedure.

The Complaints Officer keeps a record of all complaints including details of any investigation into a complaint, outcome of a complaint, any action taken on foot of a complaint and whether or not the resident was satisfied.

Ms Pauline McAveninue is a nominated person whom is available to residents to ensure that:

- (a) All complaints are appropriately responded to and
- (b) The Complaints Officer maintains the records of complaints

To fulfil this role Pauline visits the service each year to review and sign off on complaints records and to make herself available to persons if requested.

1.5 Production / Consultation trail:

15.1 A total of four drafts of this document were written during the development stage.

15.1.2 The following were consulted in drawing up of this document:-

The Policy Sub-Committee, Dara Community Living Ltd.

1.6. References

Health Act 2004 Part 9

Health Act 2004 (Complaints) Regulations 2006

Health Act 2007 Part 13

Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for persons (Children and Adults) with Disabilities) Regulations 2013

National Standards for Residential Services for Adults and Children with disabilities

Freedom of Information Acts 2014

Data Protection Acts 1988/2003/General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR enacted May 2018)

Ombudsman's Act 1980-1984

Ombudsman for Children's Act, 2002

1.7 Appendices

Appendix 1 The Listen Approach

Appendix 2 Contact Details for Making a Complaint

Under Review March - April 2018

Under Review March - April 2018

Appendix 1

Appendix 1 The Listen Approach

Use the LISTEN approach to assist you when receiving a verbal complaint

Listen:

- Listen carefully to the issues being raised by the complainant

Identify:

- Identify if there are multiple issues relevant to the complaint and separate each issue. Attempt to identify any hidden or underlying issues that may exist.
- Summarise the issues to clarify and check that you understand what the person is telling you.
- Ask the complainant to confirm that they agree with your interpretation of their complaint.
- Find out from the complainant what they want to happen as a result of their complaint.

Summarise:

- Summarise the issues to clarify and check that you understand what the person is telling you.
- Ask the patient / service user to confirm that they agree with your interpretation of their complaint

Thank the person

- Thank the person for taking the time to make the complaint

Empathise and Explain:

- Empathise and acknowledge the feelings of the complainant.
- Explain to the complainant that there will be no negative repercussions
- Explain what will happen next e.g. you may need to contact your manager *Expression of regret or apology:*
- An early expression of regret or apology can minimise the possibility of a verbal complaint becoming a formal written complaint
- Training for staff must deal with the area of expression of regret and apology. Staff must also be given the skills to recognise when a complaint can or cannot be resolved at first point of contact and when the complaint needs to be referred to Complaints Officer for appropriate management.

Now Act:

- Assess the verbal complaint
- Once a verbal complaint is received, the person receiving the complaint must ensure that they get as much information as possible about the complaint to assist them in assessing the seriousness and/or the complexity of the complaint. This in turn assists staff in determining if the complaint should be resolved at the point of contact or if the complaint should be referred to the Complaints Officer for management at Stage 2 of the complaint management process.

Staff should only attempt to manage complaints received at the point of contact if due care has been taken to establish that all issues can be addressed appropriately at the point of contact.

Appendix 2

Contact Details for Making a Complaint

Dara's Complaints Officer

Mary McMahon
Dara Community Living
36 Maynooth Road
Celbridge
Co. Kildare

Email:
mary@Daracommunityliving.ie

Tel: 01 6271484

HSE Head of Consumer Affairs

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