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COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT

The following statement will be displayed in each of The Renewal Programme premises and on our website:

Our Commitment to you:

- ✓ We welcome your comments, suggestions and complaints, so we can improve what we do.
- ✓ We aim to find a solution to complaints in a friendly manner and as quickly as possible.
- ✓ We will be fair and impartial, and no one will be treated less favourably or penalized in any way for making a complaint.
- ✓ If you need help to make your complaint, we will offer help if that is what you want.
- ✓ At all stages of complaints procedure, you may be accompanied by or represented by a friend or another person of your choosing (but not a lawyer).
- ✓ All complaints are treated as confidential. Any information you give us will only be used as necessary for investigating the complaint.
- ✓ We will ask you what you want to be done to resolve your complaint.
- ✓ We will tell you what action we have taken or propose to take.
- ✓ All formal complaints will be recorded in the Complaints Register and monitored by The Renewal Programme Senior Management Team. This will assist us in ensuring that our services are effective and that no individual or groups are treated less favourably than others.
- ✓ If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you will have the opportunity to raise your complaint to a higher level.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 This policy sets out the procedures The Renewal Programme will follow when it receives a complaint from a service user, a volunteer, a donor, an organisation, or a member of the public.

2.2 It does not address complaints made by staff (dealt with through The Renewal Programme's grievance and disciplinary procedures) or job applicants (The Renewal Programme's recruitment procedure).

2.3 The procedure provides a means to resolve a dispute between The Renewal Programme and any complainant. It requires staff at every level to work positively towards resolving the complaint.

2.4 We aim to provide a consistently high service that meets the needs of our service users and any other stakeholders. We believe that it is good practice to seek feedback from our service users and other stakeholders on the services we provide, and to be open and accountable to our service users.

2.5 We therefore positively welcome suggestions, compliments, comments and complaints. This will help us improve what we do.

3. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

3.1 A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response.

3.2 A complaint is not a request for service. (A request for service may include things like a request to make a repair to a building or a request for an advocacy appointment.)

3.3 Complaints can be verbal (face to face or on the phone), written (on paper or email) or raised by a third party on behalf of a complainant. Complaints may also be made via social media.

3.4 Complaints can be informal or formal.

- An informal complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to a member of staff or a volunteer, where the complaint can be resolved at the point of contact. (For example, a service user complains about a wet floor, which is immediately dried or cordoned off).
- A formal complaint is one which cannot be resolved immediately and requires further attention or an investigation. A formal complaint requires a formal response. An informal complaint which is not resolved at the point of first contact may become a formal complaint.

3.5 Our services also offer other avenues to provide feedback such as

- House Meetings
- Carers Forum
- Community consultations & surveys
- Community Hub Involvement Panel

3.6 We encourage service users to utilise these forums where appropriate.

Our approach will be to try to resolve complaints or concerns at the informal stage whenever possible. Service users are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their key worker or caseworker in the first instance, and particularly to raise concerns promptly rather than delay. Where this happens as part of key worker or case worker support, the staff member should make appropriate notes of the complaint and discuss appropriate action with the service user.

3.7 If the matter raised is serious (such as an allegation of harassment, violence or a risk to an individual's welfare or safety), the staff member or volunteer receiving the complaint should encourage the complainant to make a formal complaint and, if necessary, to make a complaint to the police. All safeguarding concerns must be raised via the Renewal Programme safeguarding procedure.

4. THE PROCEDURE

4.1 When someone wishes to make a complaint (other than an informal complaint which has resolved immediately), the following procedure should be adopted.

4.2 Stage One – The complaint is considered by the Director or Manager of the service concerned. If the complaint involves a Director or Manager, the CEO will consider the complaint.

4.3 Stage Two – The complaint is considered by the Chief Executive if they have not been involved in Stage One. If they have, the complaint will be considered by the Chair/Vice Chair of the Trustees.

4.4 If the complaints involves the CEO, Stage One will be heard by a Trustee, and Stage 2 by the Chair/Vice Chair of the Trustees.

Stage One

4.5 When a formal complaint is received, whatever format the complaint is in, it should immediately be passed to the Director or Manager on the day of receipt.

4.6 A complaints form is provided for convenience, but it is not essential that a complainant uses the form. Staff members supporting a service user with a complaint should try to encourage the service user to put their complaint in writing to prevent spurious complaints and to aid clarity.

4.7 The Director or Manager of the service should acknowledge the complaint within 2 working days. If the Director or Manager is away, alternative arrangements should be made for another senior manager to consider and acknowledge the complaint.

4.8 In the first instance, the Director or Manager will consider any urgent action to be taken, for example if the complaint identifies a serious risk to health, protection of data or a safeguarding issue.

4.9 A copy of the complaint or a note of a verbal complaint should be sent to Support Services for the central complaints record.

4.10 The Director or Manager will consider what action they need to take to investigate the complaint, speaking to staff or volunteers involved or reviewing records. The Director or Manager should make a note of their investigation and the conclusions they have reached.

4.11 In many instances it will be appropriate for the Director or Manager to make contact with the complainant and offer to discuss the complaint face to face or over the phone. Allowing a complainant to express their concern and be listened to, in many cases is a positive way to progress the resolution of a complaint. It also allows the gathering of more facts which will enable the complaint to be properly considered. During the discussion, the complainant might be asked what resolution they are seeking, and it might be possible to agree with the complainant a suitable way to resolve the complaint. The Director or Manager should use their discretion to decide when offering the option of discussing the complaint is appropriate. The Director or manager should make a record of the conversation.

4.12 The Director or Manager should follow up the conversation with a written response to the complaint. Alternatively, the Director or Manager may decide to respond to the complaint in writing at the outset.

4.13 A copy of the formal response to the complaint should be sent to Support Services for the centrally held complaints record.

4.14 Stage one should be completed within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, or alternatively in the case of more complex issues or a delay due to absence from work, the complainant should be advised of the timetable for responding to the complaint.

Stage Two

4.15 If the complaint remains dissatisfied, then the complainant may wish to take their complaint further to Stage Two. The complainant may be encouraged to put their complaint in writing, but this is not a requirement. It is sufficient that they have expressed that they want to take their complaint further.

4.16 The Chief Executive will then investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it.

4.17 The Chief Executive will in most cases offer the complainant a meeting to discuss their complaint. In this case, the Chief Executive will usually ask the appropriate service area to provide some background or commentary on the complaint before the meeting takes place.

4.18 If the complaint involves a member of staff, the Chief Executive will offer the opportunity for the member of staff to put forward their account, either by written statement or by presentation.

4.19 The Chief Executive will aim to respond formally to all stage 2 complainants in writing within 10 working days of the complaint being received. The 10-day limit may be extended during periods of absence or for particularly complex complaints.

4.20 A copy of the Chief Executives investigation, notes of any meetings and copies of correspondence will be filed in the central complaints held by Support Services.

5. SEEKING ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

5.1 Service users who are residents living at a Renewal Programme hostel may make a complaint to the Housing Association who owns the building. Details are in the Tenant's Handbook.

Resident service users may also contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman. The Independent Housing Ombudsman is based at Norman House, 105-109 Strand, London WC2R 0AA (Tel 020 7836 3630, Lo-call 0845 7125 973, Fax 020 7836 3900).

The Ombudsman will not usually investigate a complaint until the Renewal Programme Housing complaints procedure has been exhausted.

5.2 There are other options open to a complainant where they do not feel their complaint has been satisfactorily addressed by The Renewal Programme. For example, this could include:

- Citizen's Advice Service
- Law Centre
- Local councillor
- Member of Parliament
- The Fundraising Regulator

5.3 Most of these avenues will expect the complaint process outlined above to have been exhausted before they will consider providing assistance.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

6.1 All complaints shall be treated with regard to The Renewal Programme's Confidentiality Policy.

6.2 When investigating complaints, managers will give consideration into how to protect the complainant's identity where appropriate, during the investigation of the complaint.

6.3 Reports to the Board of management will not include personal identifiable data on complainants.

7. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

7.1 The Renewal Programme will ensure that all service users, donors, volunteers, or other parties are able to access the complaints process if they wish to.

7.2 If the complainant is not able to put their complaint in writing but would like to, the complainant will be offered an interview with a member of staff or volunteer who will assist with writing up their complaint.

7.3 The role of the member of staff or volunteer at this meeting will be confined to putting the complaints in writing, obtaining the complainant's approval for the contents of this, and ask the complainant to sign to indicate they agree with the contents.

7.4 The complainant may choose to work with a third party at this stage and throughout the process – The Renewal Programme will provide a list of potential advocates if the complainant does not have a resource they can turn to.

7.5 The complaint may also require an interpreter; if they are unable to identify someone to interpret, then The Renewal Programme will provide an interpreter.

7.6 The Renewal Programme will not unfairly discriminate against any individual on the grounds of protected characteristics.

8. RECORDING AND MONITORING COMPLAINTS

8.1 All complaints, whether formal or informal, will be recorded in the complaints register held within each service.

8.2 Copies should be retained of all formal complaints. These should be kept separately to the clients' case work file.

8.3 A copy of formal complaints will be included in a centrally held file so that reports can be prepared for the Board for monitoring purposes.

9. PUBLICISING THE PROCEDURE

9.1 The Chief Executive, Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that posters and leaflets are displayed in the waiting area, interview rooms, and other areas, welcoming complaints from service users. Posters and leaflets should clearly explain the procedure for making the complaint. Complaints leaflets should be made available at all outreach sessions.

10. ENSURING EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROCEDURE

10.1 Existing and new staff and volunteers will be introduced to the complaint procedure via induction and training. The procedure will be reviewed periodically and amendments should be proposed and agreed by the Board of Trustees.