

## **MoreLife Complaints policy**

### **Introduction**

This policy sets out the approach to the handling of complaints and is intended as an internal guide that is made readily available to all staff.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 a common approach to the handling of complaints was introduced across health and adult social care. This procedure complies with that approach.

### **Policy**

MoreLife will take reasonable steps to ensure that service users are aware of:

- The complaints procedure.
- The time limit for resolution.
- How it will be dealt with.
- Who will deal with it?
- Their right of appeal
- Further action they can take if not satisfied.

### **Receiving of complaints**

MoreLife receive a complaint made directly by a service user, or (with their consent) on behalf of a service user, or former service user, who is receiving or has received care or support, or where the service user is incapable of making a complaint, by a relative or other adult who has an interest in their welfare.

### **Period within which complaints can be made**

The period for making a complaint is normally:

- within 12 months from the date on which the event which is the subject of the complaint occurred; or
- within 12 months from the date on which the event which is the subject of the complaint comes to the complainant's notice.

Complaints should normally be resolved within 6 months. MoreLife's standard will be 10 working days for a response.

A Senior Manager (or Registered Manager in the case of CQC registered services) has the discretion to extend the time limits if the complainant has good reason for not making the complaint sooner, or where it is still possible to properly investigate the complaint despite extended delay.

When considering an extension to the time limit it is important that the Senior Manager (or Registered Manager in the case of a CQC registered service) takes into consideration that the passage of time may prevent an accurate recollection of events by the member of staff concerned or by the person bringing the complaint. The collection of evidence, guidelines or other resources relating to the time when the complaint event arose may also be difficult to establish or obtain. These factors may be considered as suitable reason for declining a time limit extension.

### **Action upon receipt of a complaint**

- It is always better to try and deal with the complaint at the earliest opportunity and often it can be concluded at that point.
- If it is not possible or the outcome is not satisfactory, the service user should be asked to put it in writing. This ensures that each side are well aware of the issues for resolution. If the service user does refuse to put it in writing, the Senior Manager (or Registered Manager in the case of a CQC registered service) will put it in writing using the Complaints form (kept on PeopleHR), to gather information, and check that the service user is happy with the detail of the complaint.
- On receipt of a written complaint an acknowledgement should be sent confirming receipt and saying that a further response will be sent within 10 working days following an investigation of the issues. It will also say who is dealing with it i.e. the Senior/Registered Manager (in the case of a CQC Registered service).
- If it is not possible to conclude any investigations within 10 working days, then the service user should be updated with the progress and possible time scales.
- A full investigation should take place with written notes and a log of the complaint and progress being made which should be included in the Central Complaints Log on OneDrive. See Complaints checklist on PeopleHR.
- It may be that outside sources will need to be contacted and if that is the case then a service user consent form will need to be signed to make such a request (speak to your Contracts Manager for further information).

### **Unreasonable Complaints**

Where a complainant becomes aggressive or, despite effective complaint handling, unreasonable in their promotion of the complaint, some or all of the following formal provisions will apply and will be communicated to the service user:

- The complaint will be managed by one named individual at senior level who will be the only contact for the service user
- Contact will be limited to one method only (e.g. in written format)
- Place a time limit on each contact
- The number of contacts in a time period will be restricted
- A witness will be present for all contacts
- Repeated complaints about the same which has been resolved, may be refused
- Only acknowledge correspondence regarding a closed matter, not respond to it
- Set behaviour standards
- Return irrelevant documentation
- Keep detailed records of all communication

## **Final Response**

This will include:

- A clear statement of the issues, investigations and the findings, giving clear evidence-based reasons for decisions if appropriate. Please see the Complaint Letter template on PeopleHR.
- Where errors have occurred, explain these fully and state what will be done to put these right or prevent repetition
- A focus on fair and proportionate outcomes for the service user, including any remedial action or compensation
- A clear statement that the response is the final one, or that further action or reports will be sent later
- An apology or explanation as appropriate
- A statement of the right to escalate the complaint, together with the relevant contact detail. It should also advise on the next step in the process if the complainant is still not satisfied. This would normally be an offer of a meeting with the Senior Manager (or Registered Manager in the case of a CQC registered service) to try further reconciliation. If the matter is still not resolved; the complainant can contact the CCG with their complaint.
- Lastly, if the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they can also complain to the Local Government Ombudsman.

## **Annual Review of Complaints**

MoreLife will establish an annual complaints report, incorporating a review of complaints received, along with any learning issues or changes to procedures which have arisen. This report is to be made available to any person who requests it and may form part of the Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme.

This will include:

- Statistics on the number of complaints received
- Justified / unjustified analysis
- Known referrals to the Ombudsman
- Subject matter / categorisation / care
- Learning points
- Methods of complaints management
- Any changes to procedure, policies or care which have resulted

## **Confidentiality**

All complaints must be treated in the strictest confidence.

Where the investigation of the complaint requires consideration of the service user's records, the Manager must inform the service user or person acting on his/her behalf if the investigation will involve disclosure of information contained in those records to a Company other than MoreLife or a staff member of MoreLife.

We will keep a record of all complaints and copies of all correspondence relating to complaints, but such records must be kept separate from service users' records.

**This policy has been approved & authorised by:**

Originator of Policy:		Katherine Sage
Authorised signatory for Policy:		Professor Paul Gately, Managing Director
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