



Complaints Policy

Policy Statement

Cottage Autism Network believes that if a service user/ donor / member/volunteer wishes to make a complaint or register a concern they should find it easy to do so. It is our policy to welcome complaints and look upon them as an opportunity to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services. This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and that all complaints or comments by service users/ donors/ members/volunteers are taken seriously.

The aim is to ensure that its complaints procedure is properly and effectively implemented, and that service users/donors/members/volunteers feel confident that their complaints and worries are listened to and acted upon promptly and fairly.

Complaints Procedure

Oral Complaints

All oral complaints, no matter how seemingly unimportant, should be taken seriously.

All contact with the complainant should be polite, courteous and sympathetic.

- At all times volunteers/management should remain calm and respectful.
- Volunteers/ management should not accept blame, make excuses or blame other volunteers.
- After talking the problem through, each Board member/volunteer dealing with the complaint should suggest a course of action to resolve the complaint. If this course of action is acceptable then the Board member/volunteer should clarify the agreement with the complainant. (ie through another meeting or by letter).
- If the suggested plan of action is not acceptable to the complainant then the volunteer or Board member should ask the complainant to put their complaint in writing to the Board of Directors.

Written Complaints

- When a complaint is received in writing it should be passed on to the company secretary who should record it in the complaints book and send an acknowledgment letter within ten working days. The company secretary will be the named person who deals with the complaint through the process. The company secretary is responsible for informing the board of management of complaints received.
- If necessary, further details should be obtained from the complainant.
- If the complaint raises potentially serious matters, advice should be sought from a legal advisor to the company. If legal action is taken at this stage any investigation by the company under the complaints procedure should cease immediately.
- Immediately on receipt of the complaint CAN should launch an investigation and within 28 days should be in a position to provide a full explanation to the complainant, either in writing or by arranging a meeting with the individuals concerned.
- If the issues are too complex to complete the investigation within 28 days, the complainant should be informed of any delays.
- If a meeting is arranged the complainant should be advised that they may, if they wish, bring a friend or relative or a representative such as an advocate.

- At the meeting a detailed explanation of the results of the investigation should be given and also an apology if it is deemed appropriate (apologising for what has happened need not be an admission of liability).

- Such a meeting gives CAN the opportunity to show the complainant that the matter has been taken seriously and has been thoroughly investigated.
- After the meeting, or if the complainant does not want a meeting, a written account of the investigation should be sent to the complainant.
- The outcomes of the investigation and the meeting should be recorded in the following minutes of the board of management and any shortcomings in the CAN's procedures should be identified and acted upon.

Training

Complaints policy training should be included in the induction training for all new committee members and in-house training sessions on handling complaints should be conducted at least annually and all relevant volunteers/Board should attend.

Complaints Received Concerning Board Members

The complaints procedure (as above) should be followed, however complaints made involving the company secretary should be dealt with by the chairperson and any complaints should be sent to the chairperson in the first instance with the complaints procedure followed (as above).

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