



Youth First Complaints & Feedback Procedure

Our complaints and feedback procedure has two stages. We will contact you within two working days of receiving your complaint or feedback, and at each further stage, to let you know what will happen next.

What happens at each stage?

Stage 1

Once we have received your complaint, a service manager will investigate and send you a response within 10 working days. The manager will let you know what we can do to resolve your complaint. If your complaint relates to the Chief Executive Officer then the Chair of the Board will appoint a member of the Board to review your complaint.

Stage 2

If you are unhappy with the response that you have received at stage 1, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed. The Chief Executive Officer will write to you within 20 working days with their decision.

For all stages of the complaints procedure, there may be times when it may take us slightly longer to respond to your complaint. If this is the case, we will write to let you know when you will receive a response.

Youth First Complaints and Compliments Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Youth First welcomes customer feedback about its services and staff, and we have a process for service users to express their views and opinions.
- 1.2 We will ensure that everyone is treated fairly and consistently in expressing those views and opinions, and we take into account equality and diversity issues.
- 1.3 We will also ensure that a customer's concerns are taken seriously, and that they receive a timely response and an explanation of how any decision was reached.
- 1.4 All complaints will be recorded on the organisation's complaints management system, and will help us to monitor our performance; to learn lessons for the future; and to inform and shape service delivery.

2 Our vision

- 2.1 To put our customers at the heart of complaints management and to use complaints as a learning opportunity to improve services

3 Equal access for all

- 3.1 Youth First is a diverse community made up of many different groups and individuals. We value and celebrate that diversity, and we believe it is essential that everyone has easy access to the complaints process.

4 Our definition of a complaint

- 4.1 'Any expression of dissatisfaction with our staff or the services that we deliver (including partners and contractors, acting on our behalf)

What is a complaint?

- 4.2 A complaint is that we:
 - Have made a mistake or have done something wrong
 - Have promised to do something but failed to do so
 - Have been impolite or unhelpful (this includes staff and contractors)
 - Have failed or delayed in carrying out a service

What is not a complaint?

- 4.3 We would not treat the following as a complaint and we would not consider them under our complaints process:

- The first request for a service or where we have been given insufficient time to deliver that service according to our service standards
 - A request for information or a service
 - An explanation of, or challenge to, a policy or procedure
 - Where legal action is in progress. However, if a solicitor is acting as an advocate for a customer, this will be logged as a complaint and it will be dealt with in the usual way
 - Insurance claims
- 4.4 This list is not exhaustive, but Youth First can only deal with complaints about services that it provides or that contractors provide on its behalf. If Youth First receives information which suggests that there may be a safeguarding issue then this will also be dealt with in accordance with its Safeguarding Policy.

5 When can a complaint be made?

- 5.1 Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the customer thinks that something has gone wrong, as there is then a better opportunity for us to carry out a thorough investigation. The more time that goes by people may not be able to recollect the exact events; officers who were involved may have left the organisation; and, on some occasions, records might not be available.
- 5.2 For these reasons, the organisation will normally only investigate a complaint about things that have happened within the last 12 months unless they were previously brought to its attention. Of course, there will be exceptions to this, such as when something might have prevented the customer from reporting the complaint earlier.

6 Our complaints process

- 6.1 Youth First has two stages to its complaints process. Where a customer is formally complaining about an issue for the first time, their complaint will normally be investigated at stage 1 of our procedure. We will let you know if we are going to deal with your complaint in a different way.
- 6.2 At each stage the complaint will be investigated by a different person.
- 6.3 Our complaint acknowledgement will contain the organisation's contact details in case the customer wishes to speak to someone about their complaint.

Stage 1

- 6.4 The service manager will ensure that the complaint is recorded on the organisation's system for recording feedback. The manager will also send the customer an acknowledgement letter within two working days, advising them that we have received their complaint. The acknowledgement letter will give the name of the officer who will be investigating the complaint and a date by which the customer will receive a written response.

- 6.5 The service manager responsible for the service that is the subject of the complaint will investigate the complaint and write to the customer within 10 working days, advising them of the outcome of their investigation.
- 6.6 If the complaint is about the service manager, the complaint will be investigated, and a response sent, by their line manager.
- 6.7 The service manager's letter will explain to the customer:
The decision on the complaint and how that decision was reached
Any action that the organisation will take as a result of the complaint
How the customer can escalate their complaint if they are unhappy with the decision.

Stage 2

- 6.8 If a customer is unhappy with the response to their complaint at stage 1, and they wish to escalate it, they must write to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) explaining why they remain dissatisfied.
- 6.9 All stage 2 complaints will be recorded on the organisation's system for recording feedback, and an acknowledgement letter sent within two working days advising receipt of the complaint. The acknowledgement letter will give the name of the officer who will be investigating the complaint and a date by which the customer will receive a full written response.
- 6.10 The CEO is responsible for carrying out a new investigation, and they will write to the customer within 20 working days of receiving the complaint explaining:
- Their decision and the reasons for that decision
 - Any action that will be taken by the organisation as a result of the complaint
 - For all stages of the complaints procedure, there may be times when it may take us slightly longer to respond to your complaint. If this is the case, we will write to let you know when you will receive a response.

Timescales

- 6.12 If a complaint is complex, it may take a longer time to reply at any of the three stages. The officer carrying out the investigation will let the customer know of any delay and they will give a new date for reply.

7 Dealing with unreasonably persistent complainants

- 7.1 In most cases, complaints can be dealt with quickly and efficiently. However, the behaviour of a minority of customers can make investigating and resolving a complaint difficult. These customers can also take up a lot of officer time so there is

less time to help others. Youth First has a procedure for dealing with such customers and it is available on its website.

8 Learning from complaints

- 8.1 The organisation puts customers at the heart of its complaints process; it has a customer focussed approach to complaints handling; and it ensures that lessons are learnt from complaints.

9 Confidentiality

- 9.1 Anyone involved in handling a complaint, at any level, has a duty to comply with this procedure and to ensure information on the complaint is kept confidential at all times.
- 9.2 All officers and managers are required to handle complaints according to the rules of data protection.

10 Representation

- 10.1 Customers can ask for a third party to act on their behalf. If it is a friend, a relative or an advocate, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, we require written authorisation from the customer allowing us to liaise with the representative and before we release any information about the complaint.
- 10.2 Customers can ask their MP and/or Ward Councillor to act on their behalf: written authorisation would not be required here.

11 Dealing with comments

- 11.1 Youth First will acknowledge receipt of the comment within 10 working days. Any further correspondence will be sent as appropriate.

12 Dealing with compliments/feedback

- 12.1 Compliments/feedback received should be recorded on the Youth First's system for recording feedback.
- 12.2 The service manager should write to the customer within 10 working days thanking them for their compliment.
- 12.3 If a member of staff is complimented, the service manager should bring this to their attention.

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