



COMPLAINTS POLICY & MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

SUMMARY POLICY STATEMENT

South Lakeland Carers is committed to providing a high quality service to everyone we deal with. In order to do this we need you to give us any comments about our service, and to tell us when we get things wrong. We want to help you resolve your complaint as quickly as possible. South Lakeland Carers treat as a complaint any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response. South Lakeland Carers listen to your complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our service.

INTRODUCTION

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

This policy covers complaints about:

- the standard of service South Lakeland Carers provide
- the behaviour of our employees, and
- any action or lack of action by employees affecting an individual or organisation

This complaints policy does not cover

- comments about our policies or policy decisions
- matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure
- anonymous complaints

South Lakeland Carers standards for handling complaints

- We treat all complaints seriously
- You will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times. We will treat your complaint in confidence and ask that you return this courtesy.
- We will deal with your complaint promptly.
- We will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within five working days and we will send you a full reply within 30 working days of receipt.
- If we cannot send a full reply within 30 working days of receipt we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full.

We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your:

- sex or marital status: this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed)
- sexual orientation
- colour or race: this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality disability
- religious or political beliefs, or trade union affiliation, or
- other unjustifiable factors, for example language difficulties or age

Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

HOW TO COMPLAIN

South Lakeland Carers treat all complaints seriously. In order to best handle your complaint we ask that you make any formal complaint in writing by email or letter.

We have a two-stage complaints procedure. At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure.

The stages of the complaints procedure

Stage 1

If we do not meet expectations, we encourage you to discuss your complaint with the South Lakeland Carers employee directly involved. Most concerns can be dealt with quickly in this way.

This is the first opportunity for South Lakeland Carers to resolve a complainant's dissatisfaction, and the majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage.

Stage 2

If you are dissatisfied with this response or feel unable to complain to the employee involved you may request a review by the relevant line manager.

If your complaint is in regard to a line manager, please forward your complaint to the Chief Officer at the main office address. If your complaint is in regard to the Chief Officer, please forward your complaint to the SLC Board of Trustees at the main office address.

If your complaint is still unresolved after Stage 2 please refer to:

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The final stage for complaints about councils, all adult social care providers (including care homes and home care agencies) and some other organisations providing local public services, who investigate complaints in a fair and independent way.

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/>

TIMESCALES FOR HANDLING A COMPLAINT

Stage 1 - maximum 30 working days

Acknowledgement within 5 working days

Full response within 30 working days

Stage 2 – maximum 30 working days

Acknowledgement within 5 working days

Full response within 30 working days

Extending time limits

South Lakeland Carers aim to complete all complaints within the timescales above; however, if a complaint is very complex it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case we will keep the complainant informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and inform them of the new deadline.

Following any stage of the procedure, a complainant has a maximum of 28 days from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.

REMEDIES

When South Lakeland Carers get things wrong we will act to:

- accept responsibility
- explain what went wrong and why, and
- put things right by making any changes required.

RECORDING COMPLAINTS

South Lakeland Carers will log all complaints on the CRM (Charity Log) we receive so that we can monitor the types of problems, the best way to sort them out and how long we are taking to deal with them. This also helps us to take a closer look at how we can improve our own service delivery. We will handle your information in line with data-protection legislation.

We will also record the relevant information and resultant action on a Lessons Learned Log so that we can implement the learning from any complaints so ensure that we follow best practice guidelines at all times.

CONTACTING US

All complaints and requests for review under our complaints procedures should be sent in writing to the following address:

South Lakeland Carers
Level 3
Stricklandgate House
92 Strickland Gate
Kendal, LA9 4PU
01539 815970
Email address: admin@slcarers.org.uk

Reviewed: August 2018

Review Date: August 2019

Designated responsible role: SLC Officer/Manager