

Reaching Families

Empowering families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Introduction

Reaching Families is committed to providing high quality services which meet the needs of our members, service users, partners, funders and other stakeholders. We recognise the value of the opinions and views of our users and we encourage feedback from them. In order to ensure our services remain at a high and continually improving standard, if there is something we are not getting right, we would like to know. We aim to make it easy for individuals to raise any concerns if necessary, therefore this policy provides a framework for handling concerns and complaints.

Definitions

- A concern is a less formal way of raising an issue – you could raise a concern if you would like to see something changed or improved within Reaching Families services. Concerns are usually able to be responded to straight away.
- A complaint is more formal and is an expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of Reaching Families work (whether justified or not) that requires a formal response.

Aims of the policy

Reaching Families wishes to encourage individuals to say when they think something about our service is not right or doesn't meet expectations. One of the ways in which we continue to improve the services we provide is by listening and responding to the views of our members, service users, partners, funders and other stakeholders, responding positively to any complaints and putting any mistakes right.

We aim to ensure that: -

- Making a complaint is as easy and transparent as possible.
- Individuals will be given clear information on request, about this policy and procedure, with guidance on how to raise a concern or make a complaint.
- We resolve any concerns or complaints quickly, fairly and effectively.
- That we deal with complaints appropriately and within the agreed time frame.
- We treat a complaint as any clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service, or charity as a whole, which calls for a response.
- We respond in the right way – for example, with an explanation or an apology where we have got things wrong and if relevant and appropriate information on any action taken.
- We have the right to refuse to accept a complaint where the complaint is clearly vexatious, malicious or motivated by racist, sexist, homophobic or other discriminatory attitudes, or where the complaint threatens or abuses Reaching Families staff, volunteers or trustees. The decision as to whether a complaint is vexatious will be taken by the managers in conjunction with the Board of Trustees where necessary. Reaching Families defines a vexatious complainant as someone who persists in making a complaint or demand when all reasonable attempts to resolve their concerns have been made.
- When a complaint identifies that something has gone wrong or has fallen below standards it is seen as an opportunity to improve and avoid a recurrence and it can allow for systems, policies, practices or procedures to be amended or put in place as appropriate.
- Assistance, where possible, will be offered to all parties in a complaint procedure to ensure equality of representation.

- All staff are familiar with this policy and procedures for raising concerns or complaints and guidance given to ensure it is properly followed.

The procedure covers concerns or complaints about the services that the charity provides, and any concerns or complaints about the staff and volunteers involved in delivering those services. Complaints regarding discrimination and victimisation will also be investigated under this complaints procedure.

All complaints will be kept confidential to the parties concerned unless a concern is raised in relation to a safeguarding matter or in relation to serious criminality in which case, we reserve the right to escalate the matter to relevant authorities. However, the complaint will normally be made known to the managers who will discuss the matter with the Board of Trustees where necessary.

Where a complaint includes a concern about safeguarding, this should be dealt with in line with Reaching Families Safeguarding Policy by the designated lead for Safeguarding. If the individual does not wish to contact Reaching Families regarding a safeguarding issue they may contact the relevant safeguarding board: -

Local Safeguarding Boards

West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board – westsussexscb.org.uk

Phone **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – 01403 229900**

West Sussex Local Adult Safeguarding Board – westsussexab.org.uk

Phone **01243 642121**

Procedure

Most concerns raised can be dealt with quickly and informally. We will respond to all concerns however they are raised, this can be done: -

- Verbally
- In writing
 - Letter
 - Email
 - Text Message
 - Facebook Message
 - Any other social media platform
 - On a feedback/monitoring form

A concern can be raised with any member of the Reaching Families team and in most cases we will be able to give you a response straight away. If the matter is more complicated or cannot be resolved straight away, we will aim to give you at least an initial response within five working days.

In the case of more complicated matters, any formal response required from the staff member will be discussed and reviewed with their line manager before providing the response to the individual making the complaint.

If the individual raising the concern or complaint is not satisfied with the response given or the way in which it has been handled, they can ask for it to be reviewed by one of the managers: -

Project Manager	Brian O’Hagan	brian@reachingfamilies.org.uk
Operations Manager	Donna Manwill	donna@reachingfamilies.org.uk

All written complaints will be logged, and an acknowledgement sent within five working days. The manager will investigate your complaint properly and give you a reply within ten working days from receipt of complaint. All reasonable steps will be taken to resolve the issue and wherever appropriate an apology given and information on any action taken. If there are reasons why Reaching Families are unable to resolve an issue as the individual would like, a clear and transparent explanation will be given.

Should the individual still be unhappy with the outcome, or their complaint is against one of the managers, a written complaint can be sent to the Chair who will report the matter at the next meeting of the Trustees, who will decide on any further steps to resolve the situation.

Helen Rodgers (Chair) helen@reachingfamilies.org.uk
Or c/o Unit 16 Oaklands Business Centre
64-68 Elm Grove
Worthing
BN11 5LH

The complaints procedure will be suspended in the following instances: -

- If at any time during the investigation matters arise that warrant investigation under disciplinary proceedings or through a criminal investigation, the complaints procedure will be suspended until those investigations are concluded.
- If a complainant is actively seeking legal redress.

Recording a complaint

The stages of the handling of a formal complaint should be properly recorded on a complaints log (appendix 1) as outlined below: -

- Date of complaint (or date file started)
- Name of individual raising the complaint
- Nature of the complaint
- Person handling the complaint
- Date of initial response
- Actions taken to investigate the complaint
- Date of formal response
- Any further actions taken

Copies of all correspondence relating to the complaint should be stored in the complaints file, kept at the Reaching Families office.

This Policy will be made available on the Reaching Families website and copies provided on request made to the Reaching Families office.

This policy has been approved by the Trustees and will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if there is a change in procedure or legislation.

Approved and signed May 2019