

Acting on compliments, feedback and complaints about adult social care – a good practice guide for adult social care practitioners

Introduction

This is intended for adult social care practitioners and organisations that commission, arrange and provide social care. The purpose of this statement is to:

- > inform their approach for acting on compliments, feedback and complaints
- > set out what people who use services, their unpaid carers, family and their representatives can reasonably expect from organisations that provide and arrange adult social care when they leave compliments and feedback or complain about a service or member of staff; and
- > provide prompts or good practice in complaint handling for those organisations.

It is important that people give feedback about their experiences of adult social care, so that services know what they are doing well and where they need to improve. Everyone has the right to receive good quality care and support, and the right to say how they feel about the quality of care and support they receive.

Compliments, feedback and complaints

Services should encourage people to give their views about the service whether positive, negative or neutral. People may wish to comment on their experience of a service without making a formal complaint. We use the term 'feedback' to refer to these comments. Feedback and compliments are of equal importance to complaints. This can help you understand what you are doing well as well as identify areas for improvement.

It is important that feedback is encouraged and welcomed from all people and that none are disadvantaged because of their disability, communication, health or care need.

To build a positive culture around using feedback and complaints to improve care we need a shared understanding of what we mean when we talk about feedback and complaints. We use the term 'complaint' in its everyday sense, to mean any statement about a service or member of staff that has not met the standard that people could reasonably expect. This is how service users generally view complaints.

Principles of responding to compliments, feedback and complaints

When someone wants to give compliments and feedback or make a complaint they can expect the organisation to deal with their concerns in line with these principles:



Fairness

You should:

- > make sure the person, their family, carer or representative knows how to give compliments and feedback or make a complaint
- > encourage people to give feedback and compliments directly to practitioners or others in the most appropriate way for them or make a complaint
- > not treat them or others unfairly if they choose to complain
- > assure them that the service will not be affected by making a complaint



Leadership

You should support Quality Matters at a strategic level by:

- > identifying a senior lead in your organisation for compliments, feedback and complaints
 - > leading by example to improve the way you deal with compliments, feedback and complaints
 - > learning more about the obstacles people face in leaving compliments and feedback or making a complaint, and act upon these to improve experiences
 - > knowing and complying with legal obligations including reasonable adjustments
 - > making information available in a format that people find easy to understand, and promoting information about independent complaints advocacy and advice services
 - > ensuring everyone knows when a concern or complaint is a safeguarding or criminal issue and what must happen
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Customer first

You should:

- > ensure the person giving compliments or feedback or making a complaint is at the heart of the process and they should feel listened to and respected.
- > keep people informed and explain what happened and why
- > try to resolve the problem as quickly as possible
- > help people to obtain the necessary support, including signposting them to advocacy services where this is appropriate, if they need help to give compliments or feedback or make a complaint
- > involve the person's representative if they have chosen to have one and consider any issues relating to consent and capacity
- > improve services by working with people that use them, listening to and learning from people's experiences



Valuing and encouraging feedback, compliments and complaints

You should:

- > deal with compliments, feedback and complaints in an open and transparent way without being defensive
 - > listen carefully to what people say and ensure staff have the skills to listen and understand what it feels like for the person
 - > have a clear and accessible complaints procedure
 - > welcome complaints through a wide range of formats and see them as valuable feedback.
 - > treat compliments, feedback and complaints as learning opportunities to improve the quality of services for all
 - > have accessible information for people with disabilities
 - > share the outcomes with everyone including staff and other people using the service
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Accepting something went wrong

You should:

- > take responsibility and apologise
- > explain what steps you will take to resolve the problem when something has gone wrong
- > be open to the public about action you have taken in response to feedback and complaints to encourage others to come forward by showing them it can make a difference
- > learn from compliments, feedback and complaints and make meaningful changes so services can improve



One complaint, one response

Where more than one organisation is involved in someone's care they or their representative should be able to complain to any of them and they will contact the other organisations, carry out a joint investigation and provide a single joint response. Individuals should not have to contact each organisation separately.

If someone complains to you and your organisation is not responsible for the care or service complained about, rather than turning them away, you should share the concerns with the correct organisation(s). You will need the individual's permission to do this. If the person prefers that their complaint is not shared with other organisation(s) you should signpost them to the right organisation instead and provide the person with their contact details.



Clear signposting to independent redress

You should:

- > inform people of their right to seek independent redress, through an Ombudsman scheme, should they remain unhappy with your organisation's attempts to resolve the concerns
- > explain how to contact the Ombudsman and provide clear signposting to the right scheme

Help and advice

- > If someone needs support to make a complaint or needs further advice you can direct them to their local [Healthwatch](#)
 - > [Citizens Advice](#) also provides information and advice about making complaints.
 - > More information about the NHS complaints procedure can be found [here](#)
 - > You can find the website for local councils [here](#)
 - > You can find information about the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, including how to make a complaint [here](#)
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