



Complaints Policy & Procedures

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Contents

- 1. Purpose of the Policy 3
- 2. Policy Definition 3
- 3. Scope 3
- 4. Guiding Principles..... 4
- 5. Responsibilities..... 5
- 6. Confidentiality 5
- 7. Implementation 5
- 8. Review of Effectiveness..... 6
- 9. Supporting Documents 7
- 10. Revision History and Approvals 7

Complaints Policy & Procedure

1. Purpose of the Policy

To define the commitment of Mediation Buckinghamshire (MB) to handling complaints effectively, ensuring they are managed within appropriate timescales, and to ensure that they inform future service improvements. This policy plays an important part in improving the accountability to our stakeholders and supports improvement of its services by responding to feedback.

2. Policy Definition

MB encourages feedback from its clients and from the organisations it works with. It views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve future services, as well as an opportunity to put things right for the individual or organisation that has made the complaint. All complaints to MB will be dealt with constructively, impartially and effectively in accordance with this Policy and Procedure; this is an important part of maintaining trust in our services. It indicates our commitment to good listening and to seeking to understand the views of our clients and of those who are connected, in any way, to the conflict resolution services that we offer.

3. Scope

A complaint can be made under this policy by any client, or any organisation which has a legitimate interest in the work of MB. e.g., a person who uses the services and/or their agents, volunteers, our providers, our partners, or organisations to which we refer callers.

A complaint can be made under this policy against the MB Board of Trustees, its employees, volunteers, and MB partners and suppliers.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

This policy does not apply to MB employees or volunteers. We have separate processes for employees and volunteers as outlined in either The Employee or The Volunteer Handbook as applicable.

Note:

The complaints procedure will cease if the complainant explicitly indicates an intention to take legal action in respect of the complaint. In this case, a senior manager or the Trustees should be informed immediately.

4. Guiding Principles

MB is committed to providing a fair and accessible complaints procedure, which is clear and transparent and ensures that we respond effectively to complaints as they are raised. The following are our guiding principles:

- Clients should know how to contact MB to make a complaint;
- Everyone at MB should know what to do if a complaint is received;
- All complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way;
- Complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and relationships are repaired;
- Information is gathered which helps us to improve what we do;
- Complaints are handled in a confidential manner;
- Any client making a complaint is treated with respect and courtesy; and
- Complainants are informed of progress throughout the process.

MB defines a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of MB, the conflict resolution services that it provides, or its suppliers.

Fairness

We will ensure that we deal with complaints fairly and ensure and that we do not discourage clients from making a complaint. Any investigation will be:

- Open and understood by all those involved in the complaint;
- Fair – not biased towards anyone involved;
- Thorough, involving finding out the relevant facts, talking to everyone involved, and checking details where possible; and
- Consistent, treating people in similar circumstances in similar ways.

We will let everyone involved know the decision reached on the complaint.

Fairness for Employees and Volunteers

We will ensure that employees and volunteers are treated fairly if a complaint is made against them. We will:

- Tell the employee(s)/volunteer(s) immediately and fully about any complaint against them;
- Give them the opportunity to be properly listened to so that they feel they have been heard by those investigating the complaint;
- Keep them informed of progress and the result of any investigation.

5. Responsibilities

MB Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of this complaints policy.

MB Trustees and senior management have responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of this policy.

MB employees and volunteers will ensure that they are familiar with the procedure for handling complaints effectively.

They will also support the complainant, where necessary, to ensure that any concern and/or complaint is dealt with, and resolved, in accordance with this policy and procedure.

MB Suppliers will ensure that they adhere to the principles set out in this policy and to the procedures that stem from it.

6. Confidentiality

In accordance with MB policies on Data Protection, Privacy and Confidentiality, any personal data and/or information created by or arising out of any complaint will be handled sensitively and in accordance with any relevant data protection requirements.

7. Implementation

In implementing our Complaints policy, we will follow the stages outlined below:

Stage One – Informal

Target Response Time 0 - 5 working days of receiving the informal complaint

Where possible, we will resolve misunderstandings on an informal basis. Clients should be encouraged and supported to raise their concerns to the appropriate member of staff/manager as soon as possible so that the problem may be resolved straight away in an open, practical and fair manner.

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can provide the MB office with a copy of their complaint in writing and request that it is further investigated by a senior manager.

Stage Two - Formal complaint

Target within 20 working days of receiving the complaint in writing

Complaints Policy & Procedure

MB will provide written acknowledgement of the complaint within **5 working days**, together with a copy of the Complaints Policy & Procedure.

The senior manager may investigate the facts of the case themselves or may delegate to an appropriate person. This will involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and, if appropriate, speaking with anyone involved with the complaint. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given an opportunity to respond.

The senior manager will then review the information collated and make a decision based on the evidence presented. The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation and of the decision reached. The complainant will also be made aware of their right to appeal and of the MB Appeal Process.

Should a complaint be upheld, any team member (employee or volunteer) involved will be advised of the decision, which may require further action under MB's disciplinary policies or additional training.

Stage Three – Appeal Process: Target for completion within 30 working days of written receipt of appeal

The complainant has the right to appeal the senior manager's decision. The appeal shall be referred to MB Trustees. The Trustees will review the actions taken so far and will decide if any further action is required. The Trustees will notify the complainant in writing of the outcome(s) of their review.

The Trustees decision is final, and no further action will be taken.

All complaints should be fully recorded in the Complaints Register

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can be involved in can be found on their website.

8. Review of Effectiveness

The implementation and effectiveness of this policy and the requirements that stem from it will be monitored by the Trustees at least annually, to identify any trends which may need further action.

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring appropriate reporting to the Trustee Board and will recommend and implement any improvement actions required.

9. Supporting Documents

Guidance for carrying out an investigation.

Complaints Register

Standard letters

10. History and Approvals

Revision History

Date	Document Version	Document Revision History	Document Author / Reviser
05/01/2022	V1.0	Full Review & Update	Anthea Beeks
19/01/2023	V2.0	Review & Update	Anthea Beeks

Approvals

Date	Document Version	Approver Title	Approver Signature
27/01/2022	V1.0	Chair of Trustees	Phyllida Middlemiss
31/01/2023	V2.0	Chair of Trustees	Phyllida Middlemiss