



Complaints Policy

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Person responsible: Caroline Bolton

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Complaints Policy

Introduction

ABM are a group of trained volunteers dedicated to supporting families on their breastfeeding journey.

As well as supporting families, we offer [training for parents and healthcare professionals](#) who want to further their knowledge.

All ABM staff and volunteers strive to get things right, but sometimes mistakes happen. When they do, it is important to put things quickly right and to use the experience to improve what we do and prevent problems happening in the future.

Our approach to complaints handling is built around three main principles: **listening**, **responding**, and **improving**. In other words, we take an active approach to asking for people's views, we strive to deal with complaints quickly and effectively, and we use the information received to learn, and improve our organisation.

Defining a Complaint

ABM does not distinguish between a 'concern' and a 'complaint'. We define a complaint as being ***'an expression of dissatisfaction, communicated verbally, electronically or in writing, requiring a response'***.

By using this simple and broad definition, we are able to act, in line with our procedures, quickly and effectively.

More About Our Three Principles

Listening

The initial contact with someone who wishes to make a complaint about something is key to the whole process. It is therefore important to:

- make sure that we really understand the issues
- obtain the right information to assess the seriousness of a complaint
- find out what they want to happen as a result of their complaint
- agree a plan and timescale at the outset
- maintain regular communication
- act quickly if we can

If we do this, people will feel properly heard and valued, they will have more confidence in the organisation, and we will be able to manage their expectations, so that the outcome is more likely to be to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

Responding

By correctly assessing the seriousness of a complaint, deciding on the most appropriate response then becomes more straightforward. Our approach focuses on ensuring that our organisation is equipped to:

- clearly gauge the impact of the complaint on all the parties involved
- establish a clear, appropriate plan of action, and
- provide the person making the complaint with relevant support and advice if appropriate.

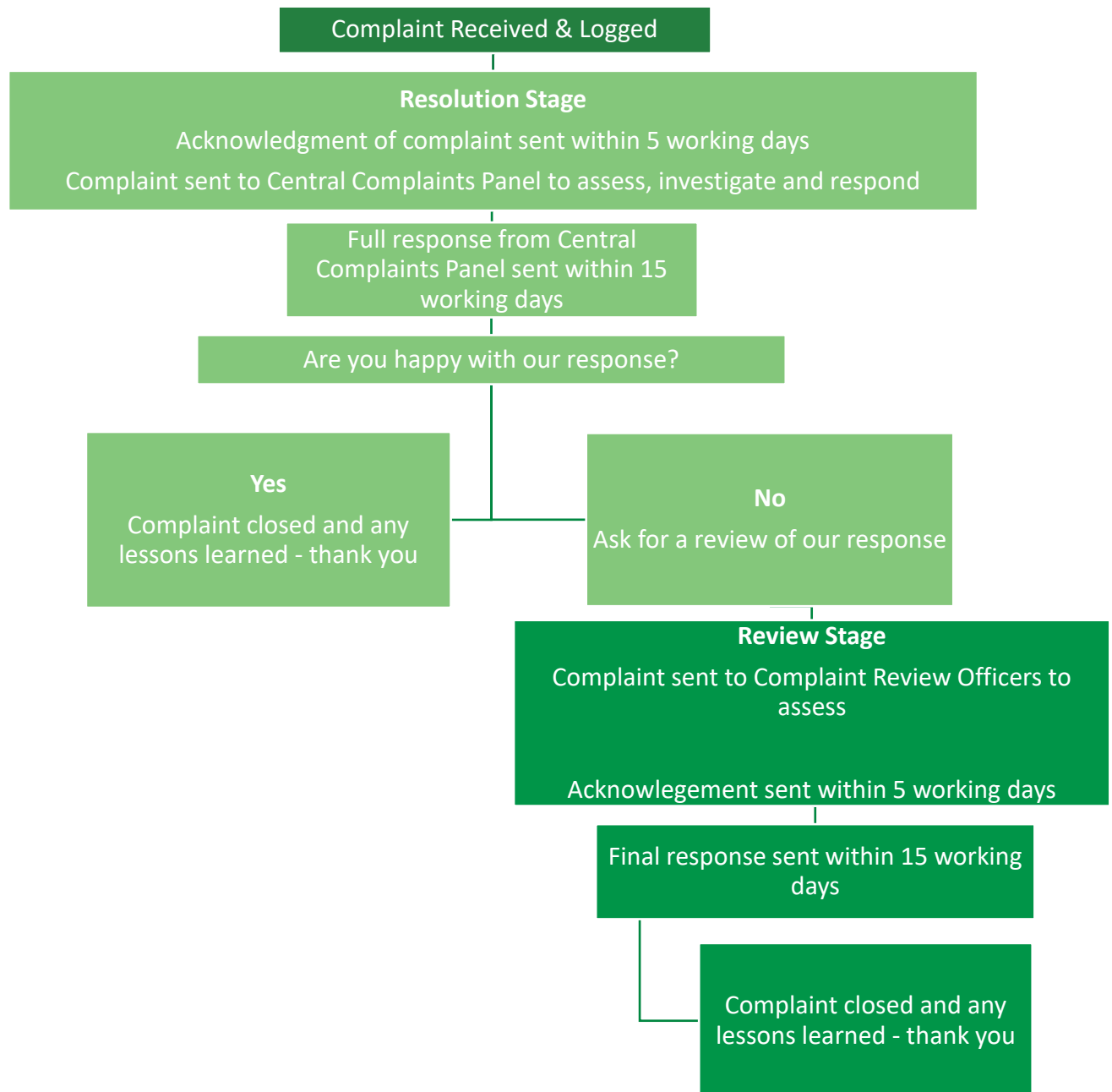
Improving

Complaints provide a vital source of insights about people's experiences of our organisation, and how we can improve. The people who provide our services are committed, enthusiastic and caring – and deserve to work with an organisation that does all it can to meet the needs of its beneficiaries. By working in partnership with all those who provide, support and use our services, we can:

- make improvements to the services we deliver,
- develop our own skills, and
- know that people using our services feel confident in us as individuals and the organisation as a whole.

Our Complaint Procedure

The following flow chart gives a clear overview of the whole complaint procedure, including the process to be followed if there is a request to review the outcome of the initial RESOLUTION STAGE if the complainant is not happy with the outcome.



Roles and Responsibilities within The Complaints Procedure

Local Volunteers e.g. BFCC, MSC & MSC

Any complaints received locally will be immediately forwarded to the CENTRAL COMPLAINTS PANEL admin@abm.me.uk. If the complaint is made verbally, the complainant should be asked if they are able to complete the COMPLAINTS INFORMATION COLLECTION FORM and email or post it directly to the address on the form. If appropriate, the local volunteer can offer to assist the complainant with completing the form and submit it on their behalf.

Central Complaints Panel

The panel consists of three members of the Central Committee who are familiar with the complaints policy and procedure and its underpinning principles. The panel will log the complaint and acknowledge its receipt within five working days. The panel will investigate and provide a full response to the complaint within 15 working days of receipt. If the complaint is complex and it becomes clear that the 15 day deadline cannot be met, the panel will contact the complainant to explain why there will be a delay and to give an undertaking of when the complainant will receive their full response.

It is also the responsibility of the panel to implement any learning from the complaint, so that ABM services can be improved. It is also the responsibility of the panel to report all complaint activity to the Central Committee at each Central Committee meeting.

Complaint Review Officers

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the Central Complaints Panel, they may ask for the response to be reviewed by two Complaint Review Officers (CROs). The CROs must not have been involved in any aspect of the complaint beforehand in order to be able to come to an unbiased view. The CROs must respond to the complainant with their review findings within 15 working days from receipt of the review request. The CRO team may, if they feel it is necessary, ask for independent help from outside the ABM and /or ask the whole of the Central Committee if they feel that is necessary.

It is also the responsibility of the CROs to implement any learning from the complaint, so that ABM services can be improved.

*PLEASE NOTE: By following closely our policy, procedures and additional guidance about the handing of complaints, ABM is confident that our response to complaints will be appropriate, fair, transparent and robust. Therefore, the response of the CRO team is **final** and concludes the organisations response to a complaint.*

Our Standards for Handling Complaints

We can receive complaints verbally, by letter or email and we treat all complaints seriously.

- Complainants will be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times.
- We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your:
 - sex or legal marital or same-sex partnership 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
 - any other unjustifiable factors, for example language difficulties, age, pregnancy and maternity.

How we might respond to a Complaint

When we get things wrong, we will:

- accept responsibility and apologise
- explain what went wrong and why
- put things right by making any changes required
- learn lessons from mistakes and change the way we work as necessary

Investigating Complaints

ABM has in place clear guidance about the role of the person investigating the complaint, and the way that the investigation will be conducted and reported. This guidance ensures that the investigator always aims to be impartial and examine the facts and evidence logically. The investigator is neither an advocate for the complainant, nor a spokesperson for the organisation; they are there to independently establish and report the facts of what happened and, if appropriate, give their recommendations to make sure that the issue which prompted the complaint does not arise again in the future.

Recording Complaints

Complaint details, outcomes and actions taken will be recorded by us and used to help us improve our services. We will handle personal information so that it is only processed and retained appropriately and legally, in line with General Data Protection legislation.

Contacting Us

All complaints and requests for review under our complaints procedure should be sent as follows:

By post: PO Box 1629, Bedford, MK42 5EF

By email: admin@abm.me.uk

If complainants are unable to contact us in writing, they can contact us by telephone on 0844 412 2948 and we will assist.

Alternative Formats

If complainants would like a copy of this policy and procedure, or a response to their complaint in another language or format, please contact admin@abm.me.uk and we will do our best to meet the complainants needs.

Supporting Documents

1. Complaints Information Collection Form
2. Unreasonable Complainants Policy