

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

1. We aim to provide the highest standards of customer service and welcome feedback, good or bad, about our performance and the manner in which we discharge our responsibilities to help us in this process.
2. Anyone directly affected by the way in which Healthwatch North Lincolnshire has carried out its functions may raise their concerns or make a complaint. We will treat both concerns and complaints in the same way.
3. This Policy does not cover:
 - Complaints or concerns about the NHS, which should be dealt with through the NHS complaints procedure.
 - Complaints about the provision of social care services which should be dealt with by the North Lincolnshire Council complaints procedure.
4. We will review this policy on a regular basis.

Procedure

Stage 1

5. In the first instance we would encourage you to raise a concern, complaint, or to provide feedback on our service informally. Providing information or correcting misunderstandings or misconceptions at this stage may enable the issue to be successfully resolved.

Stage 2

6. If the concern/complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, then you should formally write to the Healthwatch North Lincolnshire Delivery Manager via email or letter setting out the full details of your concern/complaint. Please include your name, address and telephone number and the name of the organisation you represent, if appropriate. We cannot respond to anonymous complaints.
7. The Healthwatch Delivery Manager will acknowledge receipt of your concern/complaint in writing or by email within 3 working days. It will then be investigated and attempts to resolve the matter will be completed within 15 working days, and you will be informed in writing/email of the outcome. If further time is needed, they will explain why and give a new deadline.

Stage 3

8. If you are not happy with the outcome you can appeal to the Deputy Chief Officer of Meeting New Horizons (accountable contract holder for Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire), in writing via email or letter within 15 working days. The Deputy Chief Officer will review your concern/complaint

and attempts to resolve the matter, and respond in writing or by email as soon as reasonably possible with their decision. This should normally be within 15 working days from the receipt of your appeal. If further time is needed, they will explain why and give a new deadline.

9. The decision of the Deputy Chief Officer will be final. Once the appeal process has been completed the concern/complaint will be closed.

Legal Issues

10. There may be occasions when we are required by law to refer a complaint to bodies with legal powers of investigation, or we are informed about a complaint by such bodies. At all times legal or professional investigations will take priority over this Policy and we will not undertake any actions that may compromise any external investigations. In such cases:

- The Complaints Procedure will be initiated and we will take such immediate action to protect clients, users, or ourselves through suspension of a staff member or other volunteer until such a time as any legal procedures or investigations are completed.
- Once immediate actions have been taken the Complaints Procedure will become suspended until such a time as any legal procedures or investigations are completed.

Data Protection

11. All personal data about a complainant, and collected during an investigation of the concern/complaint will be held securely and only used to help to address the concern/complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be made known to those needing to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public by us. However it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in all circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applies or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

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