



COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

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1.0 PURPOSE

Safeline actively works to promote its Complaints and Compliments Policy and procedures, and as a learning organisation, encourages positive or negative feedback so it can continuously improve.

This document outlines our approach to handling complaints and compliments. The aim of this policy is to:

- Give individuals confidence that any feedback or complaint will be dealt with in a transparent, objective, professional, timely, consistent and fair way.
- Document the complaints process that explains what will happen and when so that all those involved are aware of how a complaint will be handled.
- Ensure complaints are handled in the correct way so that Safeline is not exposed to any risk.
- Ensure a process exists that will make sure any learning points are acted upon promptly.

2.0 SCOPE

2.1 This procedure applies to Safeline clients, employees, contract workers, volunteers and trustees who receive complaints and compliments.

2.2 The following matters are outside the scope of this policy:

- Complaints which are subject to legal proceedings;
- Matters which have already been before a court or tribunal;
- Matters where the client is seeking compensation through Safeline's insurers;
- Employee complaints with regards to aspects of their work are to be dealt with using the Grievance Procedure which can be found in the Employee Handbook.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Safeline defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about Safeline's services or activities.

Safeline defines a compliment as an expression of satisfaction that Safeline is getting things right.

4.0 HANDLING COMPLAINTS

4.1 Complaints can come from a variety of sources including clients, stakeholders, suppliers, job applicants or members of the public. A complaint can be made:

- In person
- By telephone
- By letter
- By e-mail
- Via an employee, contract worker, volunteer or trustee.

4.2 Depending on the complaint, either a head of department or the Chief Executive will take the lead in dealing with the complaint in the first instance.

4.3 All complaints will be treated in confidence. Only the individual receiving a complaint and the head of department and the Chief Executive will be aware that a complaint has been received. The Chief Executive will exercise judgment as to whether trustees should be made aware of specific complaints. Anonymous requests will be acted upon but in such cases the complainant will not be able to be informed of the outcome. The Complaints Log will form part of the Chief Executive's performance review meetings with the Chair of Trustees.

4.4 Safeline will act in accordance with the documented complaints procedure and look to resolve any issues as quickly as possible. Any complaint that highlights a safeguarding issue will be dealt with in line with the agreed Safeguarding Policy.

4.5 Complaints deemed vexatious, aggressive or harassing will be dealt with by the Chief Executive and if necessary, through a legal adviser. These complaints will receive a letter informing them that their behaviour is unacceptable. It is not possible to devise a single procedure to deal with these complainants, as each case must be looked at on its own merits. Opportunity will be given for these complaints to modify their behaviours within a reasonable timescale before any further action is taken.

4.6 If an employee decides to make a complaint, they are asked to follow the Grievance Policy as outlined in the Employee Handbook. Volunteers submitting a complaint are asked to follow the procedure as outlined in the Volunteering Policy and accompanying Volunteer Handbook.

- 4.7 If a complaint is made against the CEO, the complaint will be investigated by the trustee board, led by the Chair of Trustees in consultation with Safeline's complaints procedure and governing document.
- 4.8 If a complaint is made against a trustee, the complaint will be investigated by the CEO and the Chair of Trustees (if appropriate), in consultation with Safeline's complaints procedure and governing document.
- 4.9 Safeline is committed to ensuring that all individuals are given full and equal access to the complaints procedure and it will aim to handle all complaints effectively, efficiently and fairly, regardless of who makes a complaint.
- 4.10 Safeline operates a 3-stage complaints process as set out in Appendix A. The aim is to resolve complaints to everyone's satisfaction at stage 1 and escalation will only take place when this cannot be achieved. Progression to the next stage will be at the request of the complainant, subject to them being able to explain why they were dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation at the earlier stage. If the complainant is still dissatisfied the complaint will be escalated further.
- 4.11 All formal complaints will be fully documented and recorded. All data will be stored securely with only authorised personnel having access to the data.
- 4.12 Learning opportunities will be identified and action will be promptly taken.

5.0 HANDLING COMPLIMENTS

- 5.1 Compliments can range from thank you cards, comments on social media to comments tacked on the end of letters or emails as an addition to the main information/query e.g. *'By the way, you're doing a great job – keep up the good work'*. Employees, contract workers, volunteers and trustees should be vigilant for compliments and encourage stakeholders and clients with whom they interact to inform Safeline if they have found work to be of a good standard.
- 5.2 Any complimentary comments received by employees, contract workers, volunteers or trustees should be forwarded to the Chief Executive for circulation to employees, contract workers and volunteers as appropriate. Wherever possible, the Chief Executive will send a reply expressing thanks and an assurance that Safeline will continue in its aims and objectives. Compliments will also be shared with the trustee board.
- 5.3 Anonymised compliments that Safeline receives can be used as supporting information in funding applications, in publicity material or on its website. Consent will always be sought from the feedback giver before any material is used, as set out in the terms and conditions of any questionnaires or feedback forms that are given to individuals.

5.4 Anonymised feedback is stored within a data folder on the shared F-Drive. Anonymised hard copies of feedback questionnaires are stored in a secure unit in the Safeline Office. All data is held securely and in line with data protection protocols.

6.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

6.1 It is essential that Safeline monitors and reviews the effectiveness of its complaints and compliments procedure. As part of the monitoring process either the head of department or the Chief Executive will maintain a log of all complaints received, stored securely on the F-Drive.

6.2 It is critical to identify and action learning opportunities from complaints so that Safeline can continually improve.

6.3 This policy will be reviewed annually unless employment legislation or organisational needs dictate an earlier review.

7.0 LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

7.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Safeline policies and procedures, available on the F-Drive:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and procedure within the Employee Handbook
- Grievance Policy and procedure within the Employee Handbook
- Data Protection Policy
- Volunteering Policy
- Volunteer Handbook

PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Stage 1

The complaint is directed to a head of department or, if not appropriate, Chief Executive who will:

- Record the complaint and acknowledge it within 5 working days. Complainants should set out the details of their complaint clearly and concisely and wherever possible provide evidence to substantiate their complaint.
- Ensure the Chief Executive (if they are not leading the complaint) is informed that a complaint has been received and is being dealt with.
- Investigate the complaint.
- Provide an appropriate response to the complainant within 15 working days.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response to their complaint at Stage 1, they may request that the matter be escalated to Stage 2. In this case, the complainant should identify which elements they feel have not been adequately addressed.



Stage 2

When a complaint is escalated to Stage 2 it will be further investigated by an appropriate employee. At this stage the Chief Executive will:

- Summarise the main issues to be resolved and agree these with the complainant.
- Investigate the complaint.
- Provide a detailed response to the complainant setting out the findings and the reasons or the findings within 15 working days.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the response to their complaint at Stage 2, they may request that the matter be escalated to Stage 3 and must again identify which elements of their complaint they feel have not been adequately addressed.



Stage 3

At this stage the complaint will be investigated by the Chair of Trustees, who will:

- Summarise the main issues to be resolved and agree these with the complainant.
- Investigate the complaint.
- Provide a detailed response to the complainant setting out the findings and the reasons for the findings within 20 working days.

Stage 3 complaints may involve a meeting between the complainant and the Chair of Trustees.



Complaints that are upheld

If a complaint is found to be justified, Safeline will:

- Formally apologise to the complainant;
- Agree how improvements to services or working practice will be implemented and communicate this to the complainant;
- Agree internal processes for monitoring and review of improvements.