

# Compliments, Concerns and Complaints

## August 2017

## Document Control Sheet

<b>Title of Policy:</b>	Compliments, concerns and complaints
<b>Purpose of Policy:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To enable anyone involved in Relate services who is not a member of staff to be able to feedback on those services – both in the positive where things have gone well, and in the not so positive, where there are areas we need to improve on or put right</li> <li>2. To equip Relate personnel to respond positively and effectively to any client or their representative who raises a concern or complaint about the service they have received.</li> </ol>
<b>Type of Policy:</b>	This is a corporate policy – i.e. it applies across all areas of Relate activity. It supports our need to ensure quality and a central part of our risk management approach.
<b>Who is this policy for:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clients (past, present and future) and other external stakeholders of Relate services.</li> <li>2. Partner organisations to Relate.</li> </ol>
<b>Date policy approved:</b>	21.7.17 by the Services Committee
<b>Review Date:</b>	This policy will be reviewed annually and whenever there are changes in legislation or when new guidance is issued.
<b>This policy replaces:</b>	This replaces a version revised in April 2012
<b>This policy should be read alongside:</b>	Relate policies on: Data Protection, Domestic Abuse, Child Protection and Safeguarding, Safeguarding Adults at Risk, Client Records, Confidentiality and Disclosure, Management and Practice Supervision, Services and Practice.
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Ben Collins, Director of Services
<b>Policy Lead / Author:</b>	Ammanda Major, Head of Quality and Clinical Practice
<b>Date / Version</b>	22.8.17. Final

## Compliments, concerns and complaints

We genuinely want to hear feedback – compliments help us to do more of what works, concerns and complaints help us improve.

Relate aims to give you a good experience. Most of the time we do this. And if that's the case, it would be great to know, so please get in touch.

But sometimes we don't get it right. Sometimes we make mistakes or maybe didn't explain things as well as we might have done. If you feel that's the case, then please tell us straight away or as soon as you can.

We operate a three stage process, after which, if we still haven't found a resolution to the problem, there are various options external to Relate that you can pursue:

### For compliments:

1. If we've done something well, helped you or maybe just made things a bit more bearable, tell us so we can learn how to do more of it.
2. You can do this in person or via phone or email [office@relate-bournemouth.org.uk](mailto:office@relate-bournemouth.org.uk).

### For concerns and complaints:

1. If something isn't quite right, again, please tell us. We really want to know. Usually we can fix things very quickly by talking together.

You can do this in person or via phone or email [office@relate-bournemouth.org.uk](mailto:office@relate-bournemouth.org.uk)

2. If we don't find a resolution at this stage, we might need to carry out a more formal "investigation". This is likely to be by more senior members of the organisation who might not have initially been involved in the service delivery.
3. If at this stage there is still no resolution, the issue will be passed to the Chief Executive or the Board of Trustees for consideration.

At any point you have the option of involving external governing bodies. However they will often expect you to have followed the previous steps before they will become involved.

We log all feedback, whatever it is, so that when it's a compliment, we can share the good news and when it isn't, to keep track of things and make sure that we learn and develop.

There might be times too when we "escalate" the issue ourselves for example if we feel there is an immediate concern around someone's safety.

Here's a bit more detail:

## Stage 1: to start with...

### Extra support

We know that raising a concern can be difficult – sometimes you're not quite sure exactly what the issue is. Sometimes you've just too much on. Sometimes, you're worried that by raising a concern, it will affect the type of support you get from us. We'd like to ensure that you have the support to feedback to us. Some places you can go for additional support include your local Council for Voluntary Service and the Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Whatever you want to tell us, the best place to start is to feedback directly to the people or service involved. The counsellor, centre or service manager want to hear you. So, you can write, email, speak with or ask someone else to speak for you with the person or people delivering the service and they will do their best to help you.

If that doesn't feel quite right, you can use the general feedback e-mail [Servicesfeedback@Relate.org.uk](mailto:Servicesfeedback@Relate.org.uk). Please be sure to let us know which service, centre or person you have a query about, otherwise we can't pass on the positive or help to sort things out

Whoever you get in touch with (unless it's resolved straight away, e.g., you've discussed your query with the counsellor and feel happy with the outcome so nothing more needed) will acknowledge your enquiry within 48 hours (or 72 hours if it's at a weekend).

Within five days of that acknowledgement, you should have had a more detailed reply either answering your query, or explaining what we're doing to follow things up – this should include a time by which you'll hear from us again. If for any reason we can't keep to this time frame, maybe because a key person involved in the concern or complaint is on leave or away sick, we'll offer you a new time frame and keep you up to date with what's happening. Sometimes we might ask to talk with you again to make sure we've properly understood what you're unhappy about.

Then, once we have a response to your query, we'll be in touch to see if it resolves things.

### Stage 2: if you're still not happy

You can ask for your query to be looked at again. This will generally be by a senior member of Relate staff who is independent of the people who have already looked at your query. You can let us know you want to do this, either by responding to the person who has fed back at Step 1, or using any of the other methods described above.

Again, we will ensure we stay in touch with you to explain what's happening and when you can expect to hear from us. We may ask to speak with you again to get any further information that could be helpful to reaching the best outcome for you.

### Stage 3: takings things further

If you still feeling that your query remains unresolved, the matter can be referred to the Chief Executive or Board of Trustees for their consideration. They will be looking to ensure that the process has been properly followed and that the investigation has looked at all details.

#### Stage 4: involving external organisations

If you're still not satisfied, there are a number of options available to you, depending on the nature of your complaint such as:

- The Charity Commission <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) <https://www.bacp.co.uk/>
- The funder for the service in question

Most of these organisations will have expected you to have completed the above steps before they become involved, but you can always check with them to find out the best way forward.

**Remember, if you are not happy, please tell us. The sooner we know, the sooner we can put it right.**

## Guidance for implementation

This policy should be considered by the Trustees of the individual centre. There are a series of points to answer. These should be reviewed at least annually. This policy is a part of the wider services governance framework and so will also be audited on a regular basis.

		Evidence
1.	<p>How will you enable people to feedback? Are there ways to feedback anonymously? Where are these advertised? Is Relate's compliments, concerns and complaints policy clearly and immediately available for all clients at every stage of their journey with us?</p> <p>Have you checked with customers that the ways you have chosen are properly accessible? Have you got a named person who is responsible for managing the policy process? Is the name of that person available to your clients? If not why not? Have they received training in customer relationships, feedback management and dissemination? Have you considered the amount of time they might need and how they will be remunerated? Are they clear that final reports on how a concern or complaint has been dealt with and any recommendations applied and monitored must go to the Board of Trustees and named SPC for independent centres or to the Head of Quality and Clinical Practice for Relate National?</p> <p>Are they clear that the SPC or Head of Quality and Clinical Practice respectively may request further details about any aspect of the complaint and it's handling?</p>	
2.	<p>Have you ensured that everyone understands the minimum level of detail required from someone who is raising a concern:</p> <p>Accurate contact details; date and time of contact; nature of the concern; who are they in relation to the concern and to the centre (client; relative of client; other stakeholder, etc.) Have you explained to them what will happen next and when they will hear from you?</p>	

		Evidence
3.	Is everyone in your centre clear that all feedback is valuable and that there should be no attempt to try and categorise feedback as either a formal or informal complaint. The distinction is how it is dealt with, not the way in which it is made or any sense of its relative seriousness.	
4.	Does everyone understand that Relate collects and collates information about compliments, concerns and complaints in order to celebrate and support good practice, improve individual and organizational service delivery and to inform training needs? Feedback of any kind, must be reported to the SPC on receipt. The SPC must be kept up to date with the progress and outcome of the issue raised. Centres may request advice from the SPC specifically with regard to complaint management.	
5.	Does everyone understand that receiving and reviewing feedback offers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for learning and service and individual practice improvement and development.</li> <li>• Opportunities to provide clients with helpful, respectful and clear explanations of why particular actions, approaches or interventions were undertaken.</li> <li>• Opportunities for appropriate empathy with the client's concern/distress/anger while maintaining clinically, ethically and legally sound positions.</li> <li>• Opportunities for practitioners to be transparent and open about their interaction with the person or persons offering the concern or complaint.</li> <li>• Opportunities to celebrate what has been done well and contribute to other colleagues learning and development.</li> </ul>	
6.	Do you have effective ways of sharing positive feedback with the immediate staff involved and the wider community in general as	

		Evidence
	appropriate? Have you got the client/s permission to share their feedback with the wider community?	
7.	How will you keep a log of all feedback and monitor how it is dealt with? Will it be an electronic record? Is it secure? How will it be monitored?	
8.	How will you ensure you are able to stick to the specified time limits: Acknowledgment with 48 hours More detailed feedback in 5 days Timely information regarding any potential delays	
9.	What systems do you have in place that accurately record everyone's account of what happened and why? Have you considered the importance of managing confidentiality and possible conflicts of interest?	
10.	Have you made sure you have appropriate arrangements with neighbouring centres to properly manage this part of the process? How will any necessary resources be signed off to avoid any delay?	
11.	Does your team know when they should involve Rradar in any response? Have you decided whose job it will be to inform Relate's Comms team about the concern or complaint so that Relate's reputational risk can be properly managed? Are they clear that Comms must be immediately informed on receipt and regarding outcome?	
12.	Have you considered how you will support the person/people about who the concern or complaint has been raised? Have they been given a clear written details of your complaint procedure and what they can expect? Are details of your complaints procedure and what support is offered in the event of a complaint part of all staff inductions?	
13.	Have you developed a sufficiently robust process for disseminating learning arising from a complaint? Who will monitor if the learning	



		Evidence
	has been effective, how will this be recorded and who should be kept informed? Have you got clear, up to date and legal procedures for responding to lack of progress?	
14.	Have you ensured there are clear processes for dealing with an anonymous complaint?	
15.	Have you considered who can decide if the procedure should be varied, e.g. if the concern or complaint is about the designated complaint handler? In such circumstances, have you considered who else might need to become involved?	
16.	Have you considered how you will manage appeals from either the client/s or the staff member? What are the grounds for an appeal and who will undertake the appeal so that neutrality can be properly observed?	
17.	Regular audit by National will require clear info about any concern or complaint you have received and an account about its management to include all the above points. Are you confident you are able to provide this information when required to do so?	