

HALLAM UNION ADVICE CENTRE

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Purpose of Complaints Procedure

1.1 The Advice Centre aims to provide a high quality service and is aware that sometimes it may fail to do this. The Advice Centre welcomes complaints from users and will use this procedure to ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly and objectively.

1.2 This procedure is intended to deal with matters relating to the following:

- Service Policy
- Service Delivery
- Discrimination
- Quality of Advice

These matters should not be dealt with via the complaints procedure:

- Where complaints relating to quality of advice may lead to a professional indemnity claim
- Where the centre is not directly responsible for the service
- Informal complaints – where the user wishes to draw attention to something, but does not wish to formally complain
- Complaints made by staff (dealt with through grievance and disciplinary procedure) or job applicants (dealt with through recruitment procedure)

2. Complaints Procedure

2.1 The following statement will be displayed in our waiting area:

The Advice Centre is committed to providing a high quality service to users.

If we fail to do this, we would like to know about it. This can help us to deal with the specific problem and try to ensure that it does not happen again.

If you are not happy with some aspect of our service, please ask for a copy of our “Complaints” leaflet which describes our complaints procedure or talk to one of our advisers.

2.2 The user may wish to discuss their complaint with the member of staff concerned or with the Senior Caseworker or Advice Centre Manager. Hopefully the matter can be resolved informally. Verbal complaints about waiting or opening times will be treated as informal and therefore outside the scope of this procedure although a record may be kept for monitoring purposes.

2.3 If the complaint cannot be resolved informally or if the user feels that this is not appropriate, then the formal procedure should be used.

3. Stage 1

3.1 The complainant should be invited to speak to the Advice Centre Manager to discuss the complaint. This can be done in person or by phone and the Advice Centre Manager should keep a record of the conversation on the complaints monitoring sheet. The Advice Centre Manager should endeavour to resolve the

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matter. Stage 1 should be completed within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.

3.2 If use of Stage 1 is not possible (for example if the complaint relates to the Advice Centre Manager) or if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, then Stage 2 should be used.

4. Stage 2

4.1 For Stage 2 complaints, the complainant should use the Hallam Union Complaints Procedure. This involves referring the matter to the CEO within 10 days of the receiving the outcome of Stage 1. Complaints will be investigated by a Complaints Panel and the complainant informed in writing of the outcome within 5 working days of the decision of the panel.

5. Recording and Monitoring Complaints

5.1 All complaints will be recorded and kept on file, including those that were resolved without recourse to the formal procedure. There is a file in the Advice Centre for this. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

5.2 The Advice Centre Manager will report annually to the Executive Committee summarising the nature of complaints received and how they were resolved.

5.3 Posters and leaflets relating to the Complaints Procedure should be displayed in the waiting area and at any outreach sessions. Information will also be on the website. Users should be assured that they may be accompanied and supported by a friend at any stage of the procedure.

6. Redress

6.1 In the event of a complaint being upheld, redress will be offered to the complainant. In deciding the level of redress, the Advice Centre Manager or the Complaints Panel should make their decision based on the facts of each case and the loss or inconvenience incurred by the complainant.

6.2 Suitable options for redress include:

- An apology, written or verbal
- An undertaking and subsequent report on improving or developing policies/procedure where these appear to be at fault or absent
- Agreement to undertake specific work on behalf of a user

Before any of the above are undertaken, advice should be sought to ensure that professional indemnity issues are explored and eliminated.

7. Feedback

7.1 The Advice Centre always welcomes feedback on any of its services. This is formally provided by the user feedback survey which is carried out at least annually and over the course of at least one calendar month. The results are then analysed and used for future planning.

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7.2 Users are also invited to contribute feedback in the suggestions box in the Advice Centre reception area.

Date Adopted: Aug 04

Date Last Review: Mar 10

Date for Review: May 11