



SONNET CARE HOMES

COMPLAINTS POLICY

(Issue 2 - Reviewed 01 2017)

Policy Statement

Sonnet Care Homes accepts the rights of residents to make complaints and to register comments and concerns about the services received. It further accepts that they should find it easy to do so. It welcomes complaints and looks upon them as opportunities to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services.

This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and that all complaints or comments by residents and their relatives, carers and advocates are taken seriously.

The policy is not designed to apportion blame, to consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation. It is not part of the company's disciplinary policy.

This care company believes that failure to listen to or acknowledge complaints leads to an aggravation of problems, resident dissatisfaction and possible litigation. The company supports the idea that most complaints, if dealt with early, openly and honestly, can be sorted at a local level between just the complainant and Sonnet Care Homes.

This care company acts on the basis that, wherever possible, complaints are best dealt with on a local level between the complainant and the company's management.

Aim of the Complaints Procedure

Sonnet Care Homes aims to ensure that its complaints procedure is properly and effectively implemented and that residents feel confident that their complaints and worries are listened to and acted upon promptly and fairly.

Specifically it aims to ensure that:

1. Residents, carers, users and their representatives are aware of how to complain and that the company provides easy to use opportunities for them to register their complaints
2. A named person will be responsible for the administration of the procedure
3. Every written complaint is acknowledged within 3 working days
4. All complaints are investigated within 14 days of being made
5. All complaints are responded to in writing within 28 days of being made
6. Complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and sensitively, with due regard to the upset and worry that they can cause to both residents and staff.

Responsibilities

The home managers are responsible for following through complaints for the company.



Complaints Procedure

Verbal complaints

1. The company accepts that all verbal complaints, no matter how seemingly unimportant, must be taken seriously.
2. Front-line care staff who receive a verbal complaint are expected to seek to solve the problem immediately.
3. If they cannot solve the problem immediately, they should offer to get their line manager to deal with the problem.
4. Staff are expected to remain polite, courteous, sympathetic and professional to the complainant. They are taught that there is nothing to be gained by adopting a defensive or aggressive attitude.
5. At all times in responding to the complaint, staff are encouraged to remain calm and respectful.
6. Staff should not accept blame, make excuses or blame other staff.
7. If the complaint is being made on behalf of the resident by an advocate, it must first be verified that the person has permission to speak for the resident, especially if confidential information is involved. (It is very easy to assume that the advocate has the right or power to act for the resident when they may not). If in doubt it should be assumed that the resident's explicit permission is needed prior to discussing the complaint with the advocate.
8. After talking the problem through, the manager or member of staff dealing with the complaint will suggest a course of action to resolve the complaint. If this course of action is acceptable then the member of staff should clarify the agreement with the complainant and agree a way in which the results of the complaint will be communicated to the complainant (i.e. through another meeting or by letter).
9. If the suggested plan of action is not acceptable to the complainant, then the member of staff or manager will ask the complainant to put their complaint in writing to the CEO. The complainant should be given a copy of the company's complaints procedure if they do not already have one.
10. Details of all verbal and written complaints must be recorded in the Complaints Book, the resident's file and in the home records.

Serious or written complaints

1. Preliminary steps:
 - a) When we receive a written complaint it is passed to the named complaints manager who records it in the Complaint Book and sends an acknowledgment letter within 3 working days to the complainant
 - b) The manager also includes details of Sonnet Care Homes procedure for the complainant. (The complaints manager is the named person who deals with the complaint through the process)
 - c) If necessary, further details are obtained from the complainant; if the complaint is not made by the resident but on the resident's behalf, then consent of the resident, preferably in writing, must be obtained from the complainant
 - d) If the complaint raises potentially serious matters, advice could be sought from a legal advisor. If legal action is taken at this stage, any investigation by the Sonnet Care Homes under the complaints procedure immediately ceases
2. Investigation of the complaint by the Sonnet Care Homes:

- a) The complaints manager will start an investigation without delay and within 14 days should be in a position to provide a full explanation to the complainant, either in writing or by arranging a meeting with the individuals concerned
 - b) If the issues are too complex to complete the investigation within 28 days, the complainant will be informed of any delays.
 - c) Where the complaint cannot be resolved between the parties, an arbitration service may be used. This service and its findings will be final to both parties. The cost of this will be borne by the Sonnet Care Homes.
3. Meeting:
- a) If a meeting is arranged, the complainant will be advised that they may if they wish bring a friend or relative or a representative such as an advocate
 - b) At the meeting a detailed explanation of the results of the investigation will be given and also an apology if it is deemed appropriate (apologising for what has happened need not be an admission of liability)
 - c) Such a meeting gives the company management the opportunity to show the complainant that the matter has been taken seriously and has been thoroughly investigated.
4. Follow-up action:
- a) After the meeting, or if the complainant does not want a meeting, a written account of the investigation will be sent to the complainant. This includes details of how to approach the Care Quality Commission if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome
 - b) The outcomes of the investigation and the meeting are recorded in the Complaint Book and any shortcomings in company procedures will be identified and acted upon
 - c) The company management formally reviews all complaints monthly as part of its quality monitoring and improvement procedures to identify the lessons learned.

Vexatious Complainers

This company takes seriously any comments or complaints regarding its service. However, there are some people who can be treated as vexatious complainers due to the inability of the company to meet the outcomes of the complaints, which are never resolved. Vexatious complainers need to be dealt with by the arbitration service in order that the time factor required to investigate time and time again becomes less of a burden on the Sonnet Care Homes, its staff and residents.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

Since October 2010 the Local Government Ombudsman can consider complaints from people who arrange or fund their own adult social care. This is in addition to complaints about care arranged and funded by local authorities, which the LGO has dealt with for more than 35 years.

The LGO's role includes those who "self-fund" from their own resources or have a personalised budget. It will ensure that everyone has access to the same independent Ombudsman service regardless of how the care service is funded. In most cases they will only consider a complaint once the care provider has been given reasonable opportunity to deal with the situation. It is a free service. Their job is to investigate complaints in a fair and independent way. They do not take sides and they do not champion complaints.



They are independent of politicians, local authorities, government department, advocacy and campaigning groups, the care industry, and the Care Quality Commission. They are not a regulator and do not inspect care providers.

The short film linked below provides an overview of the new adult social care service. It explains our new role and how the service will benefit both residents and care providers. You can also download a free copy of the film and a copy of the manuscript.

<http://www.lgo.org.uk/adult-social-care/>

They are fully independent of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). They deal with individual injustices that people have suffered and CQC will refer all such complaints to them. CQC deals with complaints about registered services as a whole and does not consider individual matters. They can share information with CQC but only when they feel it is appropriate. CQC will redirect individual complaints to them, and they will inform CQC about outcomes that point at regulatory failures.

Relevant Contacts

Essex Social Care Direct

socialcaredirect@essex.gov.uk

0845 603 7630

0845 606 1212 (out of hours)

Essex County Council

County Hall

Market Street

Chelmsford

CM1 1QH

0845 743 0430

The Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Citygate

Gallowgate

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 4PA

www.cqc.org.uk

03000 616161

County Police HQ

Essex Police Headquarters

New Street

Chelmsford

CM1 1NF

Call 101 (Non-emergencies) or 999 (danger or crime in progress)



The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Millbank Tower

Millbank

London

SW1P 4QP

Tel. 0345 015 4033

The Local Government Ombudsman

10th Floor,

Millbank Tower,

Millbank,

London

SW1P 4QP

Advice Line Tel: 0300 061 0614

Training

The training lead is responsible for organising and co-ordinating training on the complaints procedure.

All staff receive training in dealing with and responding to verbal and written complaints. The complaints policy and procedures are included in new staff members' induction training. In order to learn from mistakes, staff supervisions are used to check knowledge of complaint handling and to discuss formal complaint issues in order that all staff can share and learn from the experiences.

Also see Duty of Candour Policy.

All Sonnet Policies are reviewed annually, more frequently, or as necessary