



www.tonic-health.co.uk
charity no. 1167453

Tonic Health Handling Complaints Procedure

“People are reluctant to complain but only by knowing what has gone wrong will we be able to improve in the future”

Policy Statement

Tonic Health is committed to providing help and support to all of our members. We do not look at complaints as unwanted and we are firmly committed to a process of continuous improvement of which the complaints procedure is just one element.

Recognising that sometimes things go wrong, or mistakes are made, this policy outlines the procedures to follow to make a complaint and the internal procedures we follow to manage the process.

This procedure will form part of the induction process for staff, volunteers and members. A copy will be sent to anyone making a complaint.

Objectives

The objectives of this complaints procedure are to ensure that:

- any complaints that are received are investigated at the appropriate level in the organisation,
- all complaints are actioned in the most expeditious way,
- persons making complaints know how their complaint will be dealt with and
- wherever possible, lessons are learned.

Misunderstandings

Even if Tonic Health members do not regard a particular concern as a ‘complaint’, we would still like to know about it as it may help us deal with something we would otherwise overlook. These smaller things that go wrong or small misunderstandings can often be put right very quickly. We want to know about these; we want time bank members to get an acceptable solution very quickly, but we also need to learn from the process.

In order to avoid time bank members feeling that a minor issue is not worth raising as a complaint, we will take steps to encourage comment and constructive criticism at every level.

Michael Morris will record any issue where our service level has not met our time bank member’s expectations, if this is possible. Tonic Health members name will not be included, and Michael Morris will make an objective judgement on the cause of the problem and these will be analysed on a regular basis as part of our process of continuous improvement.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is defined, for the purpose of this procedure, as a written record compiled by **any time bank member of SHARE** that is sent to the appropriate person to be registered and where the originator has received an acknowledgement.

To clarify, the definition “complaint” does not include a comment provided by individuals asking for a simple remedy to a minor problem.

Integrity

During the process of dealing with a complaint we will be as open and transparent as possible. People raising complaints will be given full information about the progress of their complaint except in the cases mentioned below.

- If the complaint involves questions about the actions or competencies of individual members of staff or trustees, other processes may subsume the complaints procedure and SHARE may not be able to provide the person raising the complaint with all the relevant information. (For instance, employment legislation may prevent publication of the results of disciplinary processes)
- The legal requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (Whistleblowers) may restrict the information that can be provided to persons raising complaints.

If either of these situations occurs **the Broker/Manager/Chief Executive** will provide an explanation without disclosing any restricted information.

To ensure confidentiality, information about the progress of a complaint will only be provided to the person making the complaint.

Complaints Process

Time bank members making formal complaints are asked to write or email an explanation of the issue that has caused them to be dissatisfied. A complaint should also contain an explanation of what the person making the complaint requires to be done to resolve the issue.

Complaints should be sent to the **Broker** in order to register them within the procedure. **The Broker** will send an acknowledgement by return giving a complaint number. Including this number with any further correspondence will assist **SHARE**.

The Broker will refer each complaint to the governing body. All correspondence about complaints will be treated as confidential. The person raising the complaint will receive a written response detailing any proposed remedial action within 28 days of the receipt of the original complaint. The person raising the complaint will also be told in this response that they can request a second review.

Tonic health

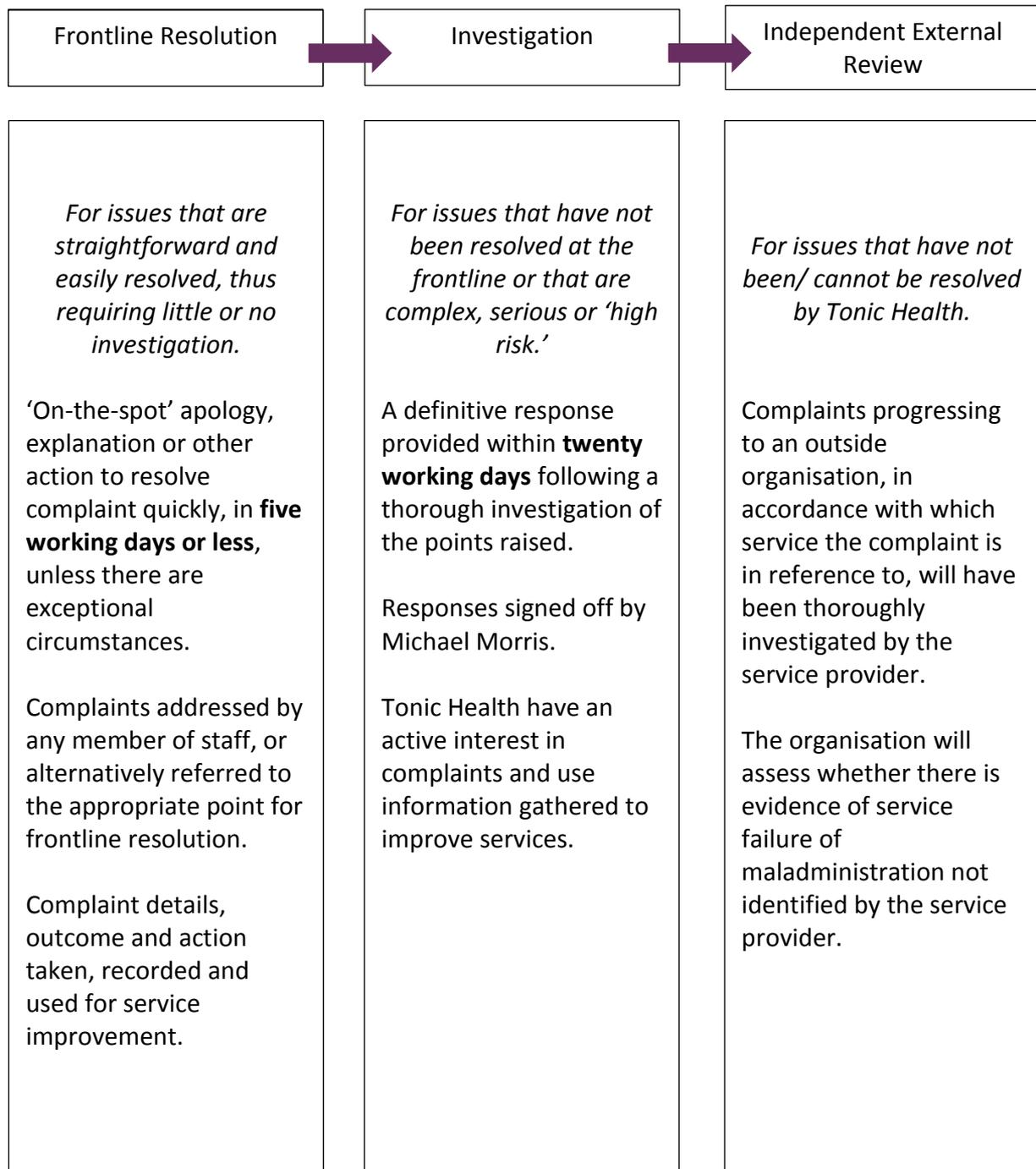
If a second review is requested, the matter will be referred to a more senior person within SHARE. This may be the Chair of the Association, a Trustee or the Chief Executive as appropriate.

Following the second review, the person raising the complaint will be provided with a written response detailing any changes to the previously proposed remedial action. In the majority of cases the second review will be the final position of SHARE. However, this final response will also indicate if, and how, the complaint can be progressed beyond this second stage.

Further progressing of a complaint beyond the second review will depend on the nature of the matter. The Charity Commission has a list of the types of issues it would be willing to investigate; similarly SHARE has an investigation procedure in some circumstances. Other alternative routes include the police, trading standards or health and safety within a local authority and a funding body if the service being complained about was funded directly by such a body. The response from the second review will explain all relevant options.

If an accusation is made that this procedure has not been followed, the matter can be raised for discussion at a Governing Body meeting.

If at any stage the time bank member making the complaint wants to stop a complaint from being progressed, the time bank member can do so in writing or email to the Broker. SHARE reserves the right to continue to investigate serious complaints in these circumstances.



Stage one: frontline resolution

Frontline resolution aims to quickly resolve straightforward customer complaints that require little or no investigation. Any member of staff may deal with complaints at this stage.

The main principle is to seek early resolution, resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. This may mean a face-to-face discussion with the customer or asking an appropriate member of staff to deal directly with the complaint.

Frontline resolution means resolving the complaint at the first point of contact with the customer, either by the member of staff receiving the complaint or other identified staff. In either case, you may settle the complaint by providing an on-the-spot apology where appropriate, or explaining why the issue occurred and, where possible, what will be done to stop this happening again. You may also explain that, as an organisation that values complaints, we may use the information given when we review service standards in the future.

A customer can make a complaint in writing, in person, by telephone, by email or online, or by having someone complain on their behalf. You must always consider frontline resolution, regardless of how you have received the customer's complaint.

What to do when you receive a complaint:

1. On receiving a complaint, you must first decide whether the issue can indeed be defined as a complaint. The customer may express dissatisfaction about more than one issue. This may mean you treat one element as a complaint, while directing the customer to pursue another element through an alternative route.
2. If you have received and identified a complaint, it must be documented.
3. Next, decide whether or not the complaint is suitable for frontline resolution. Some complaints may be very complex and/or sufficiently high risk or high profile to clearly require detailed investigation before the customer can be given a suitable response. In these circumstances, you must escalate these complaints immediately to the Stage two: investigation stage.
4. Where you think frontline resolution is appropriate, you must consider four key questions:
 - What exactly is the customer's complaint?
 - What does the customer want to achieve by complaining?
 - Can I achieve this, or explain why not?
 - If I cannot resolve this, who can help with frontline resolution?

Stage two: investigation

Not all complaints are suitable for frontline resolution and not all complaints will be satisfactorily resolved at that stage. Complaints handled at the second, investigation, stage of the complaints handling procedure are typically complex or require a detailed examination before we can state our position. These complaints may already have been considered at the frontline resolution stage, or they may have been identified from the start as needing immediate investigation.

An investigation aims to establish all the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and to give the customer a full, objective and proportionate response that represents our final position.

What to do when you receive a complaint for investigation

It is important to be clear from the start of the investigation stage exactly what you are investigating, and to ensure that both the customer and the service understand the investigation's scope.

It may be helpful to discuss and confirm these points with the customer at the outset, to establish why they are dissatisfied and whether the outcome they are looking for sounds realistic. In discussing the complaint with the customer, consider three key questions:

- What specifically is the customer's complaint or complaints?
- What does the customer want to achieve by complaining?
- Are the customer's expectations realistic and achievable?

It may be that the customer expects more than we can provide. If so, you must make this clear to the customer as soon as possible.

Where possible you should also clarify what additional information you will need to investigate the complaint. The customer may need to provide more evidence to help us reach a decision.

Details of the complaint must be recorded. The details must be updated when the investigation ends.

Closing the complaint at investigation stage

Once the investigation stage has been completed, the customer has the right to ask for an external organisation to become involved to perform an independent external review, if they remain dissatisfied.

The Complaints Handling Procedure

