

# Complaints Policy

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| Department:       | Hopestead                          |
| Policy Owner:     | Chief Executive Officer- Hopestead |
| Date approved:    | 8 June 2022                        |
| Date for renewal: | 8 June 2023                        |
| Version:          | Version 3                          |

This policy applies to Hopestead (a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered number 1190324).

## 1. Purpose

1.1. This policy sets out Hopestead's commitment to dealing with complaints.

## 2. What a complaint means to Hopestead:

2.1. At Hopestead, we value feedback of any kind to help us improve and strive towards achieving our objects to relieve people who are in need by reason of homelessness through the prevention, reduction or alleviation of homelessness and the causes of homelessness.

2.2. We take complaints seriously and will ensure we listen to what matters to our service users. We want to understand the causes of dissatisfaction within our service to enable us to learn.

NB: Hopestead will ask service users to provide authority to deal with a third party on their behalf, if required, in order to protect their personal data.

## 3. Definition of a complaint

3.1. At Hopestead, we understand sometimes things go wrong and service users may be dissatisfied with the service they have received.

- 3.2. In the first instance, we would like the opportunity to put things right and we will deal with an expression of dissatisfaction that has first come to our attention as feedback rather than a formal complaint. Our aim is to resolve these issues as quickly as possible at the point of contact.
- 3.3. If we haven't managed to do this, Hopestead will manage the issue as a formal complaint which we define as *"A dissatisfaction about the decisions, actions or failures of our services after we have had the opportunity to put things right"*.

#### **4. Stage 1 Complaints (Investigation and Resolution) - Internal**

- 4.1. We will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 1 working day of the complaint being marked as received into Hopestead
- 4.2. The Head of Operations will respond to a complaint within 10 working days, clearly communicating timescales and next contact dates.
- 4.3. In the absence of the Head of Operations, contact and response to the complaint will be made by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 4.4. In the event that it is not possible to meet the timescales set out, Hopestead will ensure the complainant is kept up to date and explain the reasons for the time taken.
- 4.5. Whilst the Head of Operations will deal with the majority of stage 1 complaints, we reserve the right to direct complaints to a more appropriate member of staff in extenuating circumstances. Once we have taken the relevant action in line with the agreed resolution, we will send a full and final response and close the complaint.

#### **5. Stage 2 Complaints (Review) - Internal**

- 5.1. If a service user has reason to believe that their complaint has not been handled in-line with the complaints policy, are unhappy with the proposed resolution or if they have a complaint about the conduct of the complaint handler, they can ask for it to be reviewed within 20 working days of when they receive their outcome letter.

- 5.2. If the service user is unhappy with the proposed resolution, or if the request for a review focuses on compliance with the process/conduct of the Hopestead member dealing with the complaint at stage 1, then Hopestead will escalate the case to be reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer and one Trustee, who will review the investigation and outcome of stage 1 (including any new information provided by the service user when requesting their review) and will make a final decision within 20 working days. If the Chief Executive Officer has been involved with the Stage 1 complaint, this will be escalated to two Trustees. That decision and any actions to be taken by Hopestead will be communicated to the service user in writing.
- 5.3. In the event that it is not possible to meet the timescales set out, Hopestead will ensure the complainant is kept up to date and explain the reasons for the time taken.

## 6. Stage 3 Complaints – External

- 6.1. The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission Regulator at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Charity Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>.

## 7. Policy Objectives

- 7.1. We will ensure that service users can make a complaint in a number of ways, such as by telephone, email, letter, live chat or face to face.
- 7.2. We will acknowledge all complaints and ensure we regularly communicate next steps and timescales.
- 7.3. We will ensure that formal complaints are handled by an appropriate staff member who will manage the complaint through to completion/escalation.
- 7.4. We will work with service users to find a mutually agreed resolution, understanding the reason for the complaint, the desired outcome and any timescales. An appropriate response will be clearly communicated to the complainant.

- 7.5. Hopestead will contact service users once their complaint has been closed to understand whether they were happy with how the complaint was handled and to understand if the service user was happy with the outcome. This information will help us improve our complaints handling service.
- 7.6. We will capture accurate data to ensure lessons are learned to improve services; this information will be reported periodically to senior management & Trustees of Hopestead.

## **8. Situations where we may not respond to a complaint**

On very rare occasions we may decide against responding to a complaint.

These may include: -

- 8.1. when a complaint is about something that Hopestead has no direct connection to. We may choose to reply to clear our name, but we are not obliged to;
- 8.2. when a complaint relates to a service provided by another organisation. In this instance we will forward the complaint to the organisation it relates to, and we will inform the complainant of our decision;
- 8.3. when someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that we have already responded to although we will always inform the complainant of our decision in this regard;
- 8.4. when a complainant is being obviously abusive, prejudiced or offensive in their manner;
- 8.5. when a complainant is harassing a staff member;
- 8.6. when a complaint is incoherent or illegible;
- 8.7. when a complaint has clearly been sent to us and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email exercise. In this instance, we can choose whether it is necessary for us to respond or not;
- 8.8. when a complaint is made anonymously and we cannot respond to a complaint, we will investigate the complaint and use the information to improve our services in any way or manner that is possible.

## **9. Record Keeping**

**9.1.** Hopestead will keep a record of each complaint and outcome for two years from the date of the complaint.

**10. Equality and Diversity**

**10.1.** Hopestead is committed to ensuring that everyone is dealt with fairly and we have an Equality and Diversity policy which confirm this approach. This policy will be applied in a manner consistent with the Equality and Diversity policy.

**11. Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

**11.1.** We will only share information as outlined in our Data Protection Policy, however, details of complaints will need to be shared internally (and with our contractors where appropriate) in order for complaints to be properly investigated.

**12. Review**

**12.1.** This policy will be reviewed every year by the Hopestead Board. We will review this policy sooner if legislation or regulations change.

**Version Control**

Note: minor updates increase version number by 0.1; major updates increase version number by 1.0.

| <b>Version</b>                 | <b>Detail</b>                                | <b>Approved by</b> | <b>Date</b>     |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1<br>Dated<br>Jan 2021         | First issue                                  | Hopestead Board    |                 |
| 2<br>Dated<br>February<br>2021 | Amended to reflect feedback<br>from Trustees | Hopestead Board    | 3 February 2021 |
| 3 Dated June<br>2022           | Amended to reflect feedback<br>from Trustees | Hopestead Board    | 8 June 2022     |