

1. Purpose

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove aims to make complaining about its actions, services, staff and volunteers as easy as possible, to treat all complaints seriously and to investigate them promptly and fairly. We undertake to:

- do everything possible to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of complainants; and
- learn from what has happened and make evident improvements.

2. Definition of a complaint

For the purposes of this Procedure, a complaint is any written or spoken expression of dissatisfaction with Healthwatch Brighton and Hove made to a member of staff with the intention of making an official, recorded complaint. A complaint can be made to any member of Healthwatch Brighton and Hove staff in person, by telephone or in writing (by letter or e-mail).

3. Confidentiality

All records of complaints will be treated as confidential in accordance with section 5 of the Healthwatch Brighton and Hove *Confidentiality Policy*.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 All complaints, and all stages of each complaint, will be recorded on the *Complaints Record Form*.
- 4.2 Informal resolution
 - 4.2.1 The member of staff who receives the complaint (verbally or in writing) will record it using the *Complaint Record Form*, and, with the assistance of the Chief Executive Officer (the CEO) if necessary, attempt to resolve the problem informally with the complainant. If the complaint concerns an individual, that individual will be asked to comment on the substance of the complaint before a resolution is determined.
 - 4.2.2 The proposed resolution will be communicated to the complainant in writing.

4.3 Formal resolution

- 4.3.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the complainant will be given a copy of this Procedure, and asked if s/he wishes to pursue it formally. The CEO will ensure that s/he fully understands how to use it.
- 4.3.2 The complainant may use another person to assist her/him with and at any stage of this Procedure. If the complainant requires an independent advocate to assist with the complaint, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove will provide all reasonable assistance in finding one. It will also make every reasonable effort to provide an interpreter if needed.
- 4.3.3 If the complaint was made verbally, the CEO will if necessary make a more detailed written note of the complaint in section 7 of the complaint Record Form, and in any event ask the complainant to sign and date it. This date will be the effective date of a formal complaint having been made.
- 4.3.4 The CEO will investigate the complaint fully, interviewing anyone necessary and making every effort to establish the facts impartially. The judgement, with reasons, will be given to the complainant in writing within 15 working days¹ of the formal complaint having been made.
- 4.3.5 If the complaint is about the conduct of the CEO, the actions detailed in 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 above will be undertaken by a member of the Board of Directors.

4.4 Right of appeal

- 4.4.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the judgement arrived at through 4.3.4 above, s/he may appeal against the decision. The appeal will be to the Chair of the Board of Directors (the Chair), in writing, signed and dated.
- 4.4.2 The Chair will acquaint her/himself with the facts of the case as established, and the reasons for the judgement. The Chair will establish whether the judgement was fairly and reasonably arrived at, and whether it is reasonable in all the circumstances. The decision will be given to the complainant in writing, with reasons, within 10 working days of the appeal having been received.

- 4.4.3 If the Chair finds that the judgement was not fairly and reasonably arrived at, or is not reasonable in all the circumstances, s/he will appoint a member of the Board of Directors to re-investigate the complaint, taking into account the shortcomings discovered. The decision of the Board of Directors will be given to the complainant within 25 working days¹ of the appeal having been received.
- 4.4.4 There is no further internal appeal against the decisions made in 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 above.