



Complaints Policy and Procedure (Volunteers and Service Users)

Manchester Deaf Centre

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1. Policy statement

Manchester Deaf Centre aims to be a learning organisation. We want to find out what we are doing well and what we are doing badly – so that we can do even better in the future. So we welcome feedback from our service users. Praise and blame are equally useful.

If you are puzzled or concerned by the way we have treated you, you may ask us for an explanation before deciding whether to make a complaint.

You may make a complaint about any aspect of our service regardless of whether you have asked for an explanation first.

If you wish to make a complaint, we have a simple procedure, which we will be happy to tell you more about.

As an Equal Opportunities organisation, we aim to treat everyone on their merits - irrespective of age, disability or impairment, race, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, sexuality, dependants or class. If you believe we may have discriminated against you on such grounds, we would be very concerned and would welcome the chance to investigate your complaint thoroughly.

2. Complaints procedure

This Complaints procedure applies to complaints about the organisation from its service users and volunteers. It does not apply to complaints from the organisation's staff, which are considered under the organisation's Grievance Policy.

3. Openness

Complaints will be fully investigated and recorded, all parties kept informed and the procedure publicised. Any member of staff referred to will be given the chance to comment or answer criticisms. Complaints about staff may lead to action under the organisation's disciplinary procedures found in the Disciplinary Policy.

4. Confidentiality

The complainant may remain anonymous. If this is likely to limit the ability to follow up the complaint, the complainant will be told this and given assurances that any information they give will only be used for the purpose it is given and not shared with anyone else except with their permission.

5. Support for complainants

Complainants will be offered information about how to get support from an independent source in putting their complaint e.g. Manchester Community Central. They will also have to chance to bring someone to support them to any meetings that are arranged regarding the complaint, as long as all people due to attend the meeting are informed of the name and position (if any) of the complainant's supporter and have no objections.

6. Complaints Procedure

The procedure will have the following stages:

1st stage – Informal discussion

This will normally be between the complainant and a senior member of staff. It will attempt to establish that the complainant wants to make a complaint, what the complaint is and, if possible, to find a resolution to the complaint that all involved find acceptable. The first stage should take place as soon as possible and within no more than a week of the complainant raising the matter.

2nd stage – Formal complaints

If not satisfied, the complainant can register a formal complaint either verbally or in writing. If the complaint is regarding a member of staff, it will be investigated using the disciplinary procedure. If the complaint relates to a Trustee member, then the complaint will be investigated by Trustee member not involved in any aspect of the complaint. If this is not possible, then an independent investigation will be carried out (*see 3rd Stage – Independent investigation*).

3rd Stage – Independent investigation

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal investigation or if the complaint is regarding a Trustee member and there are no other Trustees available to carry out the investigation, an Independent adjudicator acceptable to both sides will be asked to investigate. Possible adjudicators would include Peninsula or Manchester Community Central. A timetable for investigation would be agreed with the adjudicator. Findings would be reported in writing to the parties and the decision of the adjudicator would be considered as final. The adjudicator's decision should include recommendations about outcomes from the complaint, which should be adhered to unless there are exceptional circumstances to take into consideration (*see 4th Stage – Independent panel*).

4th Stage – Independent panel

If the Board of Trustees or complainant believe that the actions recommended by the Independent Adjudicator are unfair, either side has the right to request that an Independent Panel be formed to discuss these suggestions. This panel should consist of three independent persons acceptable to all involved, who will discuss the complaint and make a final decision on what outcomes there should be. It should aim to have its first meeting within two weeks of being formed and should further aim to come to its decision within four weeks of its first meeting. Any delay in these proceedings should be communicated to all parties involved as soon as possible. The panel can call any person before them to discuss the Independent Adjudicator's recommendations and its decision on the complainant's outcomes is final.

7. Recording complaints

All complaints will be recorded. The record will include the date of the complaint, the complainant's name and address unless they wish to remain anonymous, the form of it (i.e. in writing or verbal), who received it, what the details of the complaint were, and what action was taken, by whom and on what timetable.

8. Monitoring complaints

The MDC's Directors will report annually to the Board on complaints during the year and policies and procedures will be reviewed if appropriate.

9. Publicity

The Policy Statement will be displayed on the notice board and available on request. It will also be included on the Manchester Deaf Centre website and made available to external agencies.