Complaints, Comments and Compliments - Policy QMS-01

Summary
Imagine Independence is committed to providing high-quality support services, this includes being open to receiving feedback, compliments, concerns and complaints. This policy is open to (but not limited to) people supported, carers, families, volunteers, visitors, funders, commissioners, councils, the public, partner agencies and referrers. This policy sets out how Imagine Independence manages, responds to and learns from complaints made about our services.

Document Approval & Authority

Document Review Lead:	Head of Quality and Assurance		
Other Reviewers/Groups where this document was discussed	Compliance Manager		
Date of Approval:	1 October 2024	**Approval Level:**	SMT
Implementation Date:	1 October 2023	**Review Date:**	October 2026

Document Amendment History

Version Number	Date	Brief Description of reason for review
4	April 2012	Current policy does not have a central point for complaints to be received. Therefore, the latter, are not able to be correctly analysed and learning embedded in the organisation as a result. The procedure needed to be simplified. The previous policy did not allow sufficient flexibility for complaints to be addressed at 'front line' level. The database did not record sufficient information. There was inadequate central tracking of complaints to monitor outcomes.
5	June 2016	Periodic review no changes
6	Oct 2018	Full review of policy and procedure and all associated documents
7	May 2021	Periodic review no changes
8	Oct 2024	Periodic review no changes

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At Imagine Independence, the people we support are at the heart of everything we do. By listening to people, we improve our services and continue to make them safer, effective and more responsive.

1.2 We will learn lessons that will benefit everyone – not only the people to whom we provide services, but our commissioners, our staff and all our other stakeholders. Sharing and learning from what our clients tell us will support our planning in the delivery of our services and staff development.

2.0 Legislative Requirements

2.1 This process operates within the parameters of The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014.

2.2 **Regulation 16** Receiving and acting on complaints - *any complaint received must be investigated and necessary and proportionate action must be taken in response to any failure identified by the complainant or investigation.*

3.0 Definitions

3.1 For the purposes of this policy, '**a client'** is defined as someone who receives care/support or related services provided by Imagine Independence in any location.

3.2 Comment

A comment is defined as a 'helpful observation, whether positive or negative. Comments can also be regarded as 'suggestions for improvement'. This is actioned at source where possible and logged locally.

3.3 Compliment

- A compliment is an expression of satisfaction about a service the client or other stakeholders has received. Compliments are positive feedback received either verbally or in writing.
- They can include expressions of praise, admiration, or congratulation and provide valuable information and provide encouragement and a feeling of staff satisfaction.
- Local arrangements can be established to recognise and capture compliments and share the learning from good individual or team practice.
- Details of all compliments should be forwarded to our Quality Team who will log onto our central reporting systems. These will be shared with the SMT and EMT at agreed intervals and reported up to the Board.
- It is good practice to thank the person for their positive comments if the situation makes this a practical option.

3.4 Concern

Is defined as 'minor criticisms, grumbles, and expressions of dissatisfaction or discontent' that may require a response, but which may not need to be pursued through a formal route'. These issues can usually be resolved immediately at source by staff and to the complete satisfaction of the complainant. These will be logged at source along with any actions taken to resolve the issue. Site and/or service managers will analyse the logs of concerns on a monthly basis and use any themes emerging from them to ensure that individuals and teams are able to improve their practice at the earliest possible opportunity.

3.5 Complaint

A complaint is an 'expression of dissatisfaction requiring a formal response 'all complaints will be forwarded to the Quality Team who will log them on the central recording systems and ensure the relevant manager is investigating.

4.0 Confidentiality

4.1 All complaints & concerns will be treated with confidentiality. Only persons involved in dealing with the complaint or concern will receive information regarding to the issue.

4.2 Complaints or concerns may be received anonymously. However, this will mean that we will not be able to include the complainant in the process or inform them of the outcome - the process may be hampered because we are unable to speak to them.

4.3 All Imagine Independence's staff and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that anyone who makes a comment, or gives a compliment, receives the appropriate response. Anyone who raises a concern or complaint should be treated with compassion, dignity and respect. Service improvements and/or staff development processes should be considered and/or implemented regardless of whether the investigation finds failure. If necessary, appropriate safeguarding processes will be implemented to support the person making the complaint.

5.0 Main Points

For this policy to operate effectively, the whole system should:

- Be easily accessible for all clients, families and stakeholders.
- Be inclusive, treating everyone with dignity and respect in accordance with their needs and irrespective of gender, marital status, age, race, colour, nationality, disability, ethnic origin, social background, sexual orientation, creed, religious belief, political opinion or gender reassignment.
- Seek to resolve issues efficiently, effectively and as close to the source as possible.
- Be an open process (subject to confidentiality considerations), which is impartial, independent and objective.
- Ensure that lessons learned from complaints are disseminated throughout the organisation to improve the quality of Imagine Independence's services

5.1 We will endeavour to satisfy the person who has made the complaint. We will listen to what our clients and stakeholders say, dealing with complaints promptly and with sensitivity, striving to investigate matters thoroughly and to reach conclusions quickly.

5.2 Complaints will be dealt with on an individual basis and will be investigated fully, transparently and impartially. When something has gone wrong, it is vital to establish the facts about what happened in a systematic and transparent manner. Most complaints will be investigated by someone from the service or area involved, but for serious complaints it may sometimes be necessary to involve an independent investigator.

5.3. We have systems in place to record, analyse and regularly report on what we have learnt. Where appropriate, we will tell the person who has made a complaint about these lessons and what changes we have made to prevent similar things happening again.

5.4 There will be some complaints that cannot be dealt with under the scope of this policy. Examples are:

- A verbal complaint which has been resolved to the person's satisfaction not later than the next working day.
- A complaint made by a staff member about any matter relating to their employment.

Note: Any complaint or concern raised, that relates to an issue of abuse (or suspected abuse) must be dealt with immediately by following the Imagine Independence Adult Safeguarding Policy and reported through the incident reporting systems.

5.5 Comments, concerns complaints and compliments can be made either verbally, or in writing, by telephone or email to any member of Imagine Independence's staff, or the Quality Team and can be made anonymously.

5.6 All complaints and compliments will be forwarded to the Quality Team who maintain a system of recording required actions and outcomes, with statistics held centrally for monitoring purposes.

5.7 All complaints and compliments will be responded to in line with the timescales identified in the complaints procedure.

6.0 Equality

All complaints or concerns will be handled fairly, regardless of who makes the complaint. Imagine Independence will not show bias or give preferential treatment to any individual or group. Where needed, Imagine Independence will supply information in alternative formats and languages.