

1. Context

- 1.1 In a consumer society there is an expectation that a service will 'fit for purpose' and accountable.
- 1.2 Every effort is made to ensure a high standard of service delivery, however difficulties will occur which may give rise to dissatisfaction, which must be acknowledged and resolved.
- 1.3 A complaint may be informal or formal and each type should be dealt with appropriately.
- 1.4 The complaint process has 4 stages:
 - Informal;
 - Formal;
 - Panel;
 - External Intervention.
- 1.5 Informal complaints may also be identified by the Feedback mechanism.
- 1.6 The Deaf Community has been disenfranchised and historically, rarely had the opportunity to make their views known. Given the experience of Deaf people, individuals may be:
 - Unaware of their right to complain;
 - Unsure of the process and the appropriate way to raise issues;
 - Fearful of consequences.
- 1.7 This policy aims to provide appropriate opportunities to complain about service provision and to be involved in the process of service enhancement.
- 1.8 This policy aims to ensure that complaints are identified, recognised, investigated and, if possible, resolved to the satisfaction of all parties and with the benefit of improving service provision.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy relates to all Employees, self employed sub contracted personnel and suppliers.
- 2.2 It applies to key stakeholders, such as customers and the Deaf Community.
- 2.3 This policy applies to every aspect of the service and all operations.
- 2.4 The Complaint Guide, which is regulated by the Compliant Policy, is the principle document which manages complaints. The policy is related to the Performance Indicator Policy and informed by the customer feedback mechanism.

- 2.5 The Complaint policy is associated with Health & Safety Policy, Conduct Policy, Professional Development Policy, Supervision Policy, Appraisal Policy and Bonus Policy, together with their associated guides.

3. Principles

- 3.1 All complaints are given equal gravity, though the procedure used will differ according to the type of complaint made.
- 3.2 The process should be fair, efficient and effective whilst being sympathetic and confidential.
- 3.3 When possible, the process should facilitate an early resolution to any complaint.
- 3.4 The process should allow the service to learn from mistakes and/or experiences.
- 3.5 If necessary the Managing Director may take professional or legal advice from appropriate and confidential sources.
- 3.6 A complaint should be made immediately, however if this is not possible, it must be made within 6 months of the incident.
- 3.7 Whilst a complaint is being processed, the LSP identified in a complaint will not be permitted to work with the complainant.

Informal Complaints

- 3.8 If possible, an issue should be raised with the service provider at the time of the incident. The complaint should be outlined and the required action described. The service provider should comply with the request or explain why compliance is not possible.
- 3.9 Should this not resolve the issue, Customer Services should be contacted. A Manager will take note of the complaint and they will contact the parties concerned to obtain further information. They will attempt to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of all parties.
- 3.10 A record of the informal complaint will be made, together with any action taken.

Formal Complaints

- 3.11 If a complaint is not resolved by or is too serious for the informal process, a formal complaint should be lodged by contacting Customer Service at the Call Centre.
- 3.12 When a complaint is received, it will be acknowledged within five working days.
- 3.13 Within 10 working days the complainant will be notified of the progress of the complaint.

- 3.14 If the difficulty cannot be resolved within 20 working days of the complaint, a Complaint Panel will be established.
- 3.15 If the panel cannot resolve the difficulty within 40 working days from the time of the original complaint, it will be passed to the appropriate governing organisation.

4. Investigation

- 4.1 The Managing Director will investigate any complaint made. If necessary, contact will be made with all parties to attain the circumstances of the complaint and to ascertain individual perspectives.
- 4.2 Once information is gathered, a report will be compiled which will include a description of the complaint, a chronology of events and the views of all parties. This report will be sent to all parties involved in the complaint.
- 4.3 If possible, the report will include a proposed resolution and an invitation for parties to comment, agree or appeal.

5. Complaints Panel

- 5.1 Should a difficulty persist beyond 15 working days from the date of acknowledgement, a Complaint Panel will be formed.
- 5.2 The constitution of the panel will vary depending on the type of complaint and to which policy/contract it refers:
 - 5.2.1 Service:
Managing Director, an independent qualified Interpreter and a service consumer
 - 5.2.2 Equal Opportunities:
Managing Director and an Equal Opportunities consultant
 - 5.2.3 Health and Safety:
Managing Director and a Health and Safety consultant
 - 5.2.4 Other Complaints
Composition will depend on the nature of the complaint.
- 5.3 The role of the Panel will be to investigate the complaint further and attempt to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

6. External Intervention

- 6.1 Should the Panel be unable to negotiate a settlement within 35 working days from the date of acknowledgement, the matter will be referred to an appropriate external body for further action.
- 6.2 Subsequent action will vary dependent on the type of complaint made:
 - 6.2.1 Language Service Professional:
Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People;
Association of Sign Language Interpreters;
Institute of Translation & Interpreting.
 - Diversity:
Equalities Commission

Race Equalities Commission
Health & Safety:
Health & Safety Executive
Other:
Health Care Commission
Local Authority Complaints Procedure
Independent Police Complaints Commission

7. Service Monitoring

- 7.1 A proactive approach to service improvement will be adopted by the provision of a feedback mechanism.
- 7.2 The feedback mechanism is available as a Feedback Form (a self seal, freepost form) and via the company internet website.
- 7.3 The Call Centre will issue Feedback Forms to the Referrer (the person requesting the service), and the Funder (the entity paying for the service).
- 7.4 The Employed or self employed sub contracted Language Service Professional (LSP) will issue Feedback Forms to clients (the Deaf people and hearing people involved in an assignment)
- 7.5 The results of feedback will be recorded and statistically analysed. Any written response will be noted.
- 7.6 A target of a 10% return of Feedback Forms is set.

8. Implementation

- 8.1 The managing Director will implement this policy by managing the Quality Assurance Policy, Performance Indicator Policy and associated guide. They will deal with any complaint made and if necessary for a Complaint Panel and/or contact external bodies.
- 8.2 An informal complaint may be made in person, by telephone, videophone, textphone, facsimile or email.
- 8.3 A formal complaint may be made by using the Complaint Form (a self seal, freepost form), by letter or videoletter.
- 8.4 A Complaint Guide will be available to customers via the company internet website.
- 8.5 The requirement to adhere to this policy will be included in the Employment Contract, Freelance Contract, service agreements and relevant policies.
- 8.6 Employees and self employed sub contracted personnel will be made aware of the complaints procedure and how to instigate it via the Employee Handbook and/or the Language Service Professional Guide.

8.7 The feedback mechanism will be monitored and any indication of dissatisfaction will be investigated.

9. Responsibility

9.1 The Managing Director is responsible for this policy and they will review it at least once per year.

9.2 All Employees and self employed sub contracted personnel have a duty to adhere to and promote the policy.