



**Sight
Scotland**



**Sight Scotland
Veterans**

Complaints Policy

Confidentiality level	Open
Service	Sight Scotland, Sight Scotland Veterans
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18/07/24	3.2	Ewan MacKinnon	Referral to external bodies section added
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Document references

Document name
Duty of Candour Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Grievance Policy
Complaints Procedure for Volunteers

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1. Introduction

We at Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans take a positive approach to complaints, they are valued and used to improve our services, so if something goes wrong, we want to know. We will ensure that complaints are acknowledged and responded to promptly, and that lessons are learned to support improvements to our services.

2. Purpose

This policy provides a framework within which service users, clients, or members of the public, can contact us to convey dissatisfaction with the services offered and/or received, and how we will respond.

3. Scope

We regard a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction by a service user, client, or a member of the public, about actions taken, actions not taken, or the standard of service provided.

4. How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made to any colleague (employees and volunteers) in person, telephone, and in-writing, including letter and email. Contact details are listed below.

Telephone: 0131 229 1456

Email: complaints@sightscotland.org.uk

Post: Sight Scotland/Sight Scotland Veterans, 2a Robertson Avenue, Edinburgh, EH11 1PZ

We will also accept complaints made to us directly via direct messaging on social media channels, although we reserve the right to not respond to complaints made in generalised open chat forums and threads.

When a complaint is made, the colleague handling this will request the following details.

- complainant name
- contact details
- the situation that led to the complaint
- what occurred to necessitate the raising of a complaint
- what the desired outcome is from making this complaint

If the complainant is not comfortable with raising a complaint, a 3rd party (family member, friend, carer, etc.) can complain on their behalf, if they have consent to do so. We will check that the 3rd party has the authority raise the complaint, and we may insist on proof before proceeding with an investigation.

At any time during the complaint process, the complainant can independently raise their concerns with the appropriate regulatory body or local authority, and seek assistance from independent advocacy services.

Complaints can be made anonymously and will be reviewed should enough detail be provided. In such instances we will be unable to communicate the findings of the investigation and the actions taken to resolve the complaint.

Colleagues wishing to make a complaint about an internal matter should refer to either the Grievance Policy for employees or the Complaints Procedure for Volunteers.

5. Complaint Response Applicability

To ensure access to all relevant information is available and to help conduct a robust investigation, complaints will only be considered where they relate to matters that occurred within 12 months of the complaint being made. In exceptional circumstances, and at our discretion, we may accept a complaint outside this period.

The welfare of any service user is always paramount, where an allegation of abuse is made against a colleague, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority Adult Support/Child Protection Team and the Police, as per our Safeguarding Policy. In such situations, our complaints process will be superseded by the investigation from the Local Authority and/or the Police. Full details will need to be provided to ensure an adequate investigation is conducted, you will be informed of this should it be required.

Should the complaint be in regard to a serious incident that occurred within the provision of our health and care services, this policy may be superseded by our Duty of Candour Policy.

6. Complaints Response

We will acknowledge complaints as soon as we are informed of the issue. This could consist of an apology at the time, acknowledgement that something has gone wrong, and actions taken to resolve the issue. We aim to resolve issues raised within five working days, if this is not possible, we will provide an update on the situation. If the complainant is not happy with the response, they can request that an investigation is carried out, this should be requested within 2 months from the date of our response.

Investigations will be carried out where they have been requested by the complainant, or immediately where it is clear that an investigation is required, such as serious or high-risk issues. Where we intend to carry out an investigation, we will aim to notify the complainant within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint or investigation request.

An Investigating Manager, not involved in the complaint but with the necessary knowledge to conduct the investigation, will be appointed. They will be the main point of contact for the complainant during the investigation. The complainant may be contacted by the Investigating Manager during their investigation to seek further information about the event(s) that occurred. Communication will be via the method requested or the method that the complaint was received.

Our aim is to complete investigations within 20 working days from the date that the investigation begun. Occasionally, it may not be possible to meet this timescale, if there are justifiable reasons for extending the timescale, the complainant will be notified and provided with a revised date for the investigation's completion.

Where clarification or consent is required in order to progress an investigation, the complaint response timescales will be paused until this is received.

Once the investigation is complete, the complainant will be contacted in writing and through their preferred communication method by the Investigating Manager, unless the complainant has requested not to be contacted.

The lead investigator will provide:

- a summary of the complaint
- the actions taken to investigate
- an outline of their findings
- if the complaint has been upheld
- what has been agreed/done to resolve the complaint (where appropriate to share this information)
- referral details to external regulatory bodies should the complainant be unhappy with the response.

7. Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be respected and maintained throughout the complaints process, with information only shared where necessary to address the complaint(s) raised. Details of individual complaints are shared only with those involved in the event that the complaint is regarding, it's investigation, and resolution.

Details may be amended, and complaints anonymised to share internally to ensure lessons are learnt and to foster good practice. For full details on how your data will be handled, please refer to our Privacy Statement.

8. Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and thoroughly. However, in rare circumstances, the nature or volume of a complainant's contact or their behaviour may become unreasonable, disproportionate, or vexatious. Such behaviour can hinder our ability to resolve genuine complaints and allocate resources effectively.

We define vexatious or unreasonable complaint behaviour as conduct that is persistent and in bad faith, abusive, aggressive, or otherwise clearly an abuse of the complaints process. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Persistently pursuing a complaint that has already been investigated and completed, where no new substantive information has been provided.
- Making repeated complaints about the same issue or closely related issues, having already received a final response.
- Submitting excessive volumes of correspondence or complaints that are clearly designed to harass or cause disruption.
- Using abusive, aggressive, or threatening language (written or verbal) towards our staff and/or volunteers.
- Falsifying information or making deliberately misleading statements.
- Making unreasonable demands that are disproportionate to the complaint's substance or beyond our capacity to meet.
- Complaints made in bad faith, such as those motivated by a desire to cause trouble rather than genuinely seeking resolution.

When we believe a complaint or a pattern of complaints falls into the category of vexatious or unreasonable behaviour, we will take the following steps:

- An assessment will be made by the individual who responded to the original complaint, or the Investigating Manager, where applicable.
- If there is concern that behaviour is becoming vexatious, we will usually issue a written warning to the complainant. This warning will clearly explain why we consider their behaviour to be vexatious, specify the unacceptable behaviour, and inform them that continued such behaviour may lead to us limiting contact or ceasing to respond.

If the unreasonable behaviour continues after a warning, or if the behaviour is sufficiently severe (e.g., serious threats or abuse), a decision may be made to cease investigating further complaints or to limit contact with the complainant.

This decision will be made by Head of Governance & Insights, ensuring consistency and impartiality. All decisions will be documented, including the reasons and evidence supporting the decision.

The complainant will be informed in writing of this decision. This notification will clearly state:

- That we deem their current and/or future complaints vexatious or unreasonable.
- The specific reasons for this decision, referring to the policy definitions and examples of their behaviour.
- That we will no longer engage with them on the specific issue(s) previously dealt with, or that we will limit future contact to service delivery and only genuinely new and substantive complaints.
- That any further contact or complaints regarding the same or closely related issues will not receive a response.
- Their right to refer their complaint about our decision or their original complaint to the relevant regulatory body, along with their contact details.

9. Referral to external bodies

Complainants can at any time during the process independently raise their concerns with the appropriate regulatory body or local authority, and/or seek assistance from independent advocacy services. Details of which can be found below.

Registered Care Services

Please contact the Care Inspectorate via the details below.

Care Inspectorate Headquarters
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

Online Form: <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/online-complaint-form>

Telephone: 0345 600 9527 (Monday to Friday: 09:00 – 16:00)

Email: concerns@careinspectorate.gov.scot or enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

Contracted Services

Please contact the appropriate Local Authority.

You can find contact information for Scotland's 32 local authorities on the COSLA website: <https://www.cosla.gov.uk/councils>.

The Royal Blind School

If the complainant feels that their complaint has not been handled adequately, as per Section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, a complaint can be made to the Scottish Government directly.

The Scottish Ministers
Learning Directorate

Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

E: EdSSection70@gov.scot

Upon receipt of the complaint, an investigation may be conducted by HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE). For further information on this process, please refer to the role of HM Inspectors of Education in the process - Section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980: guidance on making a complaint at: www.gov.scot.

Advocacy and Support

If the complainant wishes to receive independent support or advocacy to help progress their complaint, the following organisation should be able to assist.

Citizens Advice Bureau: [Citizens Advice Scotland \(cas.org.uk\)](http://cas.org.uk)

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance: <https://www.siaa.org.uk>