



Feedback and Complaints Policy

Policy Details

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1. Policy Statement

Vision Support is committed to maintaining the highest standards of transparency, accountability, and integrity in all our operations. We welcome feedback and take complaints seriously, viewing them as opportunities to improve services and governance. We are committed to ensuring that no individual is treated unfairly for raising a concern in good faith. Individuals who raise concerns will be protected from victimisation or detriment in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and our Whistleblowing Policy.

This policy provides a clear and accessible process for raising concerns, including those related to the running of the charity, the conduct of the Board of Trustees and the CEO. We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that the complaints process is accessible to all individuals, including providing information in alternative formats where required.

Complaints will be handled with confidentiality, impartiality, and sensitivity, ensuring that all parties are treated fairly. We encourage individuals to voice their concerns without fear of reprisal, knowing that their input is valued and will be addressed promptly and thoroughly. If a resolution cannot be reached through our internal process, further steps may be taken to seek independent review or mediation.

Some complaints may fall under our Whistleblowing Policy, especially if they involve serious concerns about wrongdoing, fraud, or risk to people or the charity. In these cases, please refer to the Whistleblowing Policy (on the Charity (G) Drive).

This policy is open to everyone who has dealings with Vision Support, and people acting on their behalf. The policy will be part of the process of monitoring the quality, effectiveness and non-discriminatory nature of Vision Support. Vision Support:

- Is committed to providing a good standard of quality services to service users, other agencies and organisations.
- Will take seriously any concern or complaint and will investigate it promptly, for resolution as quickly as possible.
- Recognises that all service users, agencies and organisations a) have the right to raise concerns or complaints about the running of Vision Support or our services; and b) have access to clear information on how to voice complaints and concerns.
- Will deal with complaints in line with Vision Support's Data Protection Policy.
- Will keep a register of all complaints, which will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Trustees.

All staff, volunteers and Board members are required to read, understand and comply with this policy and its procedures. This policy will also be available on our website.

2. Providing Feedback

Vision Support strives for high standards and welcomes feedback from individuals, service users, stakeholders, funding bodies and anyone who works with us, on all aspects of our running and services. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us evaluate and improve our work.

Feedback or complaints can be provided via many routes, to include via our website, post, email or telephone, or by talking to a member of staff that may be out in the community.

We will ensure that individuals who require support to provide feedback or make a complaint are offered appropriate assistance, including advocacy or communication support where necessary.

3. Handling Positive Feedback

We will ensure that positive feedback is shared with the staff and volunteers who delivered the service, so that we can continue to provide a service that is meeting individual needs and to show that our hard work is appreciated.

Managers will keep records of positive feedback and the services that it relates to.

4. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by an individual, whether justified or not. An individual may make a complaint if they feel Vision Support has:

- Failed to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service, or made a mistake in the way the service was provided
- Failed to act in a proper way
- Provided an unfair service

Individuals may also complain if they are not happy with the way Vision Support is being run. This could be for reasons such as:

- **Financial Mismanagement:** how donations are being spent, lack of transparency in financial reporting, or misuse of funds.
- **Governance Issues:** the actions or decisions of the Board of Trustees or the CEO, especially if they are perceived as unethical, non-compliant with regulations, or not in the charity's best interest.

- **Lack of Accountability:** poor communication, unresponsiveness, or failure to provide clear information about the charity's activities and impact.
- **Conflict of Interest:** allegations that Board members, the CEO, or other staff have conflicts of interest that are not being properly managed, leading to decisions that benefit individuals over the charity's mission.
- **Ethical Concerns:** actions or policies of the charity that may be seen as compromising its ethical standards, such as partnerships with questionable entities or engaging in activities contrary to the charity's values and mission.
- **Lack of Impact:** perceived inefficacy of the charity's efforts, where donors or beneficiaries feel that the charity is not making a meaningful difference.
- **Transparency in Fundraising:** how funds are raised, such as aggressive or misleading fundraising tactics, or failure to adequately explain how donations will be used.

Anonymous complaints will be accepted and considered where sufficient information is provided. Where a complaint relates to a member of staff, volunteer, trustee, or senior manager, the complaint will be handled by an appropriately independent person who has no direct involvement in the matter. Any conflicts of interest will be declared and managed in accordance with the organisation's Conflict of Interest Policy. However, our ability to investigate may be limited if we are unable to follow up with the

complainant. All anonymous reports will still be logged and reviewed for trends or potential risks.

This policy and procedure relate only to complaints received about Vision Support and its services.

4.1. Concern or Complaint

It is important to establish the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of their developing into formal complaints.

If you have any concerns about our work please tell an employee of Vision Support as soon as possible, so they can quickly understand your concerns and try to put things right.

If you are not happy with the response to your concern and/or you want to make a formal complaint, please follow the complaints procedure below.

5. Handling Complaints

Whilst we aim to provide a high level of service in all areas of our work, occasionally we may fall short of the standards we set

ourselves, or those that others have come to expect of us. Individuals may wish to express dissatisfaction about the standard provided by the organisation, and they have the right to complain to us.

This policy sets guidelines for all staff and volunteers to follow when handling complaints. We will make all staff, volunteers and members of the Board of Trustees aware of this policy and make it available to anybody who wishes to see a copy.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Ensure everyone knows how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be handled
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear timeframes
- Provide individuals with a fair and effective way to complain about our work
- Ensure that complaints are monitored to improve our services
- Manage persistent or vexatious complaints in a proportionate manner, while ensuring that legitimate concerns continue to be addressed.

Vision Support will endeavour to:

- Listen carefully to complaints and treat them as confidential, where possible
- Record, store and manage all complaints securely in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the organisation's Data Retention Schedule and will only be kept for as long as necessary to fulfil legal, regulatory, and operational requirements.
- Investigate the complaint fully, objectively and within the stated timeframe
- Notify the complainant of the results of the investigation and any right of appeal
- Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented to ensure that there is no reoccurrence
- Report annually on the number, nature and outcomes of complaints, and use this analysis to inform service improvements.

The Chief Executive Officer and the Head of HR and Governance (or nominated delegate) will oversee the management of complaints and ensure they are accurately recorded.

6. Resolving Complaints

Resolving complaints as close as possible to point of service delivery means that we can deal with them as soon as possible. This encourages individuals to keep using our services and helps us to learn lessons and improve. We will:

- Try to resolve any complaint as soon as possible and within the time frames set out in this policy.
- Explain our complaints process in English, Welsh, or another language of the individual's choice, and provide information in accessible formats where required.
- Let the complainant know what action we have taken and keep them informed of progress.
- Ensure that we will support any individuals needing assistance in making a complaint.

7. Complaints Procedure

There are three stages to our Complaints Procedure.

Stage 1

If you have any feedback/complaints about the running of the charity or any service provided by Vision Support, please discuss it with a member of staff in the first instance. If you are unhappy with an individual, you can contact us by telephoning

Head Office on 01244 381515 and ask to speak to an available manager.

Often, we will be able to give you a response straight away however, if the issue is more complicated, we will undertake to give you a response within five working days. Where the complaint cannot be resolved immediately, we will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and aim to provide a full response within the same timeframe.

Stage 2

If you are not happy with our initial response or wish to raise the issue more formally, please write to the Chief Executive Officer, at Units 1&2 The Ropeworks, Whipcord Lane, Chester, CH1 4DZ or alternatively you can email information@visionsupport.org.uk. All written complaints will be logged, and you will receive a written acknowledgement within five working days.

The aim is to investigate your complaint fully and to give you a reply within fifteen working days advising how the problem will be dealt with.

If this is not possible, an interim response will be made informing you of the action taken to date or actions being considered.

Stage 3

If after we have responded to you, you are not satisfied, a letter can be addressed to The Chair of the Board of Trustees at Units 1&2 The Ropeworks, Whipcord Lane, Chester, CH1 4DZ, marked "Private and Confidential", or by email at ChairOfTheBoard@VisionSupport.Org.Uk. This is the final stage of our complaints procedure, and the Chair will ensure that a suitable and appropriate process for the review of the complaint is agreed with the individual. All investigations will take place within 15 working days after the letter being received by the Chair and they will decide whether to uphold or partially uphold the outcomes from the previous investigation and identify any further actions that may need to be taken. Vision Support will review complaints to identify trends, risks, and opportunities for service improvement, and will report learning outcomes to the Board of Trustees where appropriate. A full, objective and proportionate response will be sent to the individual explaining the reason for the decision.

If the individual remains dissatisfied with how the complaint has been handled, they may refer the matter to the Charity

Commission for England and Wales or another relevant regulatory body where appropriate. Please note: the Charity Commission will only become involved where there is evidence of serious misconduct or mismanagement, such as misuse of funds, safeguarding failures, or lack of proper oversight by Trustees.

Other complaints relating to publicly funded services may be referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman where applicable.

In exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible to achieve the time frames we have detailed in this policy, and the individual will be contacted and informed of the reason for the delay, and we will endeavour to agree a revised timescale for completion. Extending the investigation period will be an exception rather than the rule, and Vision Support will always try to deliver a final response within the timescales set out in this document for each stage of the complaint.

Depending on the nature of the concern, individuals may wish to contact other regulatory bodies:

- Fundraising concerns: Fundraising Regulator
- Data protection issues: Information Commissioner's Office

- Safeguarding concerns: Local authority adult or child safeguarding teams

Signed on behalf of Vision Support

Board of Governors: _____

Print Name: _____

Dated: _____