

Customer Care Policy & Complaints Procedure



Introduction

The Customer Care Policy of disAbility Cornwall & IoS is informed by its Mission:

‘To facilitate a fully inclusive society in Cornwall through empowering disabled people to achieve independence, choice and control’.

The organisation will be driven and guided by its aims

1. To proactively work in partnership to achieve our mission.
2. To increase opportunities within the social, education, training and employment environments.
3. To challenge discrimination and inequalities.
4. To promote examples of good practice.

The customer care process furthers the Charity’s Mission and Values especially in fulfilling our commitment to being client focused, widening participation and embracing diversity.

disAbility Cornwall & IoS is committed to treating all our clients with fairness, respect and sensitivity, expressly demonstrating our commitment to our Equality and Diversity Policy.

Recognising and respecting the particular and specific needs of our clients, the organisation aims to provide accurate and relevant information, advice and support services to all who use them, whether they be individuals, organisations, groups, other charities etc.

disAbility Cornwall & IoS acknowledges that all members of staff, volunteers and trustees share the responsibility for fulfilling the organisations commitments to its clients and, to facilitate this, disAbility Cornwall & IoS provides a range of support and guidance for staff, volunteers and trustees from point of induction onwards.

The Charity is committed to dealing with requests and enquiries accurately, promptly and efficiently, reporting timescales where appropriate and regularly monitoring service delivery and staff performance.

The organisation respects individual confidentiality by holding information securely and not releasing it to unauthorised persons or organisations in compliance with Data Protection regulations (see our Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policies)

The organisation is committed to client satisfaction. In the event that a client's requests or queries cannot be met, a full explanation will be offered.

The organisation welcomes feedback on our services and encourages suggestions for development and improvement (see our Client Feedback procedure detailed on page 7 of this Policy document).

The organisation is committed to ensuring that every client receives the highest possible standard of service and will respond to any problems quickly to remedy any deficiencies as soon as possible.

Allocation of Enquiries (Advice Services)

When an enquiry is made the following courses of action will be taken:

Simple enquiries e.g. phone numbers, organisations to contact etc. will be dealt with and answered by; the person who has answered the phone or the person who is meeting the enquirer.

Enquiries that cannot be answered immediately will be left in the central enquires folder.

- **Answer Phone enquires** will be responded to within one working day of the message being left.
- **Email and letter enquiries** will be responded to within one working day.
- **General enquiries** will be researched and the enquirer contacted with the findings by the member of staff who took the initial enquiry unless the enquiry requires specialist knowledge.
- **Specialist enquiries** will be researched and the enquirer contacted with the findings by the member of staff who took the initial enquiry or another member of the team with specialist knowledge.

When responding to an enquiry, staff will:

- Call from a charity-owned telephone (excluding mobiles), in order to preserve confidentiality as the charity phones withhold caller ID.
- Ensure prior consent is obtained before leaving messages on clients answer machine and record consent on case notes
- Advise clients that their details will be held on our confidential data base for six years and they have a right to see these notes at any time. Notes will not be shared with third parties, but may be viewed by our external auditors bi-annually.

- Record on case notes how client wishes to be kept updated on case progress, eg: by telephone, email, in writing or face to face
- Check if the client is already known to the service. If an 'open case' exists, the enquiry can be passed to the relevant adviser or the Advice Services Manager if it's not clear
- Check 'open cases' on a weekly basis to ensure key dates and deadlines are met or additional support/supervision is requested. Review of individual caseload is the responsibility of their line manager and the individual.
- Inform their manager if they have an excess of 10 new but not yet dealt with enquiries.

Future Actions Procedure and Key Dates

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that matters requiring future action are:

- followed up at the appropriate time;
- not accidentally overlooked;
- based on 'best practice' at all times.

Any client affected by a delay will be informed and an indication given of when and how this will be dealt with.

If an enquiry can not be dealt with immediately by the appropriate staff member the following procedures will be followed:

- If the enquiry is for a staff member to deal with on their return or when next in the office, a message will be left either in the enquiry folder for advice line staff, or, in the pigeon hole for the relevant staff member clearly identifying the nature of the message, date and staff member who left it.
- Individual staff members are responsible for recording work commitments and matters that need to be addressed at a future date on the computerised main office diary. All open cases on the case management system will not be closed until follows ups and outcomes are complete.
- If a staff member is on sick leave or does not attend work at the expected time (for whatever reason) the Manager will ensure that their work load, cases open on the case management system, diary and 'in tray' for that person is checked and where possible, work is reallocated or apologies are made.

All staff check the computerised diary daily for key dates and commitments.

Key Dates are dates that are significant to the client, such as, deadlines for action by or on behalf of a client.

When Information Must be Confirmed to a Client in Writing

disAbility Cornwall & IoS will, when deemed necessary; notify Clients in writing of appointments and actions.

The Line Manager overseeing a client's case will instruct an Adviser if information of significance needs to be relayed or confirmed to a client in writing. Copies of client correspondence will either be kept in the client filing cabinet alphabetically or stored electronically on the client case file.

Informing Clients about the Progress of an Enquiry

- The client will be kept fully informed on the progress of his/her enquiry at all times.
- Each client will be asked if they wish to be kept updated, by telephone, email, in writing, or personal visit to the office.
- A client MUST give prior consent for information to be left on an answering machine. This information MUST be clearly recorded on his/her file.
- Any additional information or development will be relayed to the client at the earliest opportunity by the chosen method on contact.
- All attempts to contact or update a client will be recorded on the case management system.

Case closure

- Most cases are resolved immediately, the information or advice is provided at the time and the case is closed automatically on the system unless further actions are set.
- If clients do not respond to further actions or follow-ups after 3 separate contact attempts at different times and dates the case is manually closed, and notes entered onto the system as to reason for the unsuccessful contact.
- When cases with further actions are completed, the difference outcome is recorded and the case will be automatically closed.

File Review

The line manger will use charity log to identify the cases for review and will note the client number on the supervision sheet with any amendments or alterations to recording or advice provision. A copy the of supervision notes are given to the adviser

The Advice Services Manager will ensure that independent file reviews are carried out during supervision sessions as follows:

Advisers with less than 6 months experience: 3 randomly selected files weekly.

Advisers between 6 months and 2 years: 4 randomly selected files monthly.

Advisers with 2 years or more experience: 3 randomly selected files monthly.

Individual Adviser Supervision Record Sheets are provided for each session to record topics discussed. The supervisor will:

- Use Charity Log Referral Audit System to check all substantive and procedural issues have been adhered to.
- Record client ID numbers and any omissions or issues that need to be dealt with; these sheets are left with the adviser to make any amendments in an agreed timely manner depending on work pattern and commitments.

The sheets are then signed by both the adviser and supervisor and filed in the supervision folders.

The Managers' case reviews will be carried out bi-monthly by a co-opted member of the Board of Directors who is employed in the advice and guidance sector and has previous management knowledge of disAbility Cornwall & IoS's Advice Service and its policies and procedures.

Client Feedback Procedure

disAbility Cornwall & IoS will annually evaluate its services using methodologies appropriate to each particular service. This evaluation will commence with reviewing the appropriate section(s) of the organisation's Business Plan. In the case of the Advice Services, this is achieved by randomly selecting from the client case management system 200 or 10% of the clients who used the services within each financial year. A questionnaire concerning service provision will be sent to these clients along with a stamped addressed envelope. There will also usually be the opportunity for participants to be entered into a free prize draw as an incentive for completing questionnaires. The feedback information is collated and annual evaluation reports are compiled for inclusion into disAbility Cornwall & IoS annual's report to inform future strategic direction and business planning activity. The Advice Services also have continual feedback opportunities via Survey Monkey on the websites www.disabilitycornwall.co.uk, www.cornwallsendiass.org.uk and through the client referral/follow-up procedure. Any shortfall in service provision is highlighted and brought to the attention of the Advice Services Manager who will collate all comments into the quarterly Advise Services Report for the CEO and management committee to discuss.

Complaints Procedure

The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to ensure that Clients who are not satisfied with the service they have received from disAbility Cornwall & IoS have a recognised means of having their complaint heard and dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

disAbility Cornwall & IoS seeks to provide a high standard of service to all, regardless of Physical or Mental Disability or Mental Ill Health, Race, Colour, Creed, Nationality, Ethnic or National Origin, Sex, Marital or Parental Status, Gender Re-assignment, Sexual Orientation, Age, Religion or Belief, Political Belief, Class, Caring Responsibility or Employment Status.

disAbility Cornwall & IoS's Complaints Procedure provides a process where any individual or organisation using a service can make a complaint, which will be investigated, and appropriate action taken to address the issue(s) raised as quickly and effectively as possible.

These procedures determine:

1. A process for all using a service to make a complaint about any aspect of the service;
2. A fair method of dealing with unsatisfactory work or conduct;
3. A method to complain/appeal against an action.

These procedures apply to all who use a disAbility Cornwall & IoS service..

Every effort will be made to resolve complaints informally before formal procedures are invoked and where clients feel comfortable to do so, they are encouraged to raise complaints informally with the Chief Executive in the first instance or, in the case of an Advice & Information Service client, the Advice Services Manager.

disAbility Cornwall & IoS will ensure any complaint of alleged misconduct is investigated fully and promptly. Prompt investigation will enable the organisation to decide whether the matter can be resolved through training or counselling or whether to invoke the staff/volunteer Disciplinary Procedure.

Clients will be made aware how they may complain by the staff member they report the complaint to.

If a complaint is taken over the telephone, details of this procedure will be sent to the Client.

disAbility Cornwall & IoS will ensure all Clients have the right to be accompanied by a representative at all stages of the procedure.

A Client has a right to express any complaint concerning any aspect of disAbility Cornwall & IoS's services.

Formal Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Stage

The matter should be raised initially with the Chief Executive or, in the case of an Advice & Information Service client, the Advice Services Manager will reply orally to the complainant. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved within five working days, the matter should be referred to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Stage #1

If the client continues to be aggrieved, they should put the matter in writing (using the Complaints Form shown in Annex 1 of this Policy document where the Client wishes to use this form) to the disAbility Cornwall & IoS Chief Executive who will discuss the problem/complaint with the individual. If the matter is not resolved within 5 working days it should be referred to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Formal Stage #2

Within ten working days of a failure to agree under Stage 2, a meeting will be held with the Chief Executive or the Advice Services Manager and the Board of Directors, comprising of a minimum of THREE Management Board members (none of whom have so far been involved with hearing the complaint in question). Any decision made at the meeting will be confirmed to the client in writing within five working days.

Stage 4 – Formal Stage #4

If the Client is still dissatisfied, the complaint will be considered by a new panel. This panel will comprise of two independent qualified persons and disAbility Cornwall & IoS's Chairperson.

At all times the time limits specified may be altered by mutual agreement e.g. to arrange meetings at a mutually convenient time or to allow matters to be investigated fully.

Advice to Service Users who wish to make a Complaint

In the first instance, you should speak to, or write to your named contact at disAbility Cornwall & IoS or the Chief Executive.

disAbility Cornwall & IoS

Units 1 G & H Guildford Rd Industrial Estate

Hayle

Cornwall

TR27 4QZ

T: 01736 756655

If you choose to write, please mark the envelope 'Private and Confidential'.

If a Client is not satisfied with the outcome of a Formal Stage 4 hearing, they have a right to appeal. The Client (or their representative) should request, in writing, an appeal panel hearing within four weeks of the Formal Stage 4 hearing outcome.

The panel that looks into the appeal should meet within 20 working days of the request for an appeal hearing. The panel is made up of three people, the Chairperson of disAbility Cornwall & IoS and two other Members of the Board of Directors or independent qualified persons. The client can attend to present the complaint and may bring a companion with them.

The appeals panel will announce its decision and any action to be taken, in writing, within 48 hours of the hearing.

disAbility Cornwall & IoS will take notice of the decision of the appeals panel and will respond to the Client within 14 days of the hearing.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Signed by Chief Executive		
Date of adoption	January 2014	
Date of review/revision:	May 2018	Added section for case closure
Date of next formal review	May 2019	
Responsibility for reviewing and updating	Chief Executive	

Annex 1 - COMPLAINTS FORM

If you wish to complain about disAbility Cornwall & IoS please complete this form and return it to us at Units 1 G & H Guildford Rd Industrial Estate, Hayle, Cornwall. TR27 4QZ.

Please tell us the details of your complaint

Please tell us what you feel should/should not have happened

Please tell us what you what you would like us to do now

Your name, address and telephone number

Are you happy for us to contact you here? Yes/No

Thank you for completing this form. You will receive a response within 5 working days.