



Complaints Policy and Procedures

Author / Checked	
Date Created	20/10/23
Approved by	OT
Issue Date	October 2023
Date for next Review	October 2024

1. Aims

The Complaints Policy sets out the process for managing complaints ensuring that they are dealt with fairly, effectively and within prescribed time-scales.

2. Policy Statement

Future Men (FM) aims to provide a high standard and quality of service to all who come into contact with the organisation. However, we recognise that we may fall short of these aims from time to time. In this context, FM encourages people to complain when they feel the service they have received, or the way in which it was delivered did not meet the standards they expected. We recognise the value of reflectiveness and the positive effect complaints can have on improving services. Likewise, FM welcomes and encourages positive feedback from the users of its services as this helps to reinforce the principles and practice of good service. Compliments or positive feedback can be made in writing, by e-mail, telephone or in person.

3. Scope

This policy is intended for the following:

- FM service users and parents /carers
- partner organisations, including local authorities and referral agencies
- occupiers of properties in the immediate neighbourhood of schemes operated by FM
- individuals who have had contact with FM and are not satisfied with the response or service they received.

FM Staff should refer to the Grievance Procedure. Details of how to access any external complaint mechanisms are contained later in this policy.

4. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the policies below:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing

5. Definitions

The difference between a concern and a complaint:

- a. A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'
- b. A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

6. General Principles

Future Men will:

- investigate fully and fairly and respond in writing to all complaints made;
- try to resolve complaints on the spot, as close to the point of service delivery as possible and apologise where this is deserved;
- address complaints within a reasonable timeframe (as outlined below);
- treat all complaints as confidential within the procedure and reassure complainants that no detriment will occur as a result of them making a complaint;
- fully comply with the requirements of all appropriate and relevant legislation;
- value complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve, record all complaints and analyse the data at regular intervals;
- make sure the procedure is widely publicised;
- offer access to an interpreter when appropriate;
- ensure that the person making the complaint fully understands the procedure that will be followed;
- ensure that service users are aware that they may be represented by an appropriate advocate at all stages of the process. Complainants under the age of 16 will be given access to an independent advocate;
- train staff to be positive about complaints and manage them skilfully;
- try to deal with anonymous complaints of a serious nature but recognise that progress may be limited in such cases.

7. Summary of Stages of Complaints Procedure:

Stage	Lead Staff Member	Response Time	Administration
First Stage – Informal Raising and Resolution of Concerns	Front Line Staff	Immediate or written response within 5 days	Acknowledge outcome in writing and record on Central Record Log at Head Office
If the complainant is still unhappy			
Second Stage	Manager of relevant service area / or Operations Director / or Chief Executive	Max 15 Working Days	Record complaint in writing, and enter on Central Log. Respond in writing
If the complainant is still unhappy			
Third Stage	Impartial Panel* comprising Trustee / Ops Director / Chief Executive / Manager of relevant service	Max 20 working days	Report produced and decision circulated to all those involved.
If the complainant is still unhappy refer to the appropriate external body			

Notes

*The post holder nominated as the responsible person at this stage is responsible for forming the independent panel and would not be a member of that panel. The Independent panel will be made up of two, or in more serious complaints, three people in a senior position (Operations Director and above) who are not involved directly in the area from which the complaint originated and will include a Trustee.

- a. At all stages the complainant has the right to present their complaint in person to the person(s) who is considering the complaint.
- b. In order to protect the confidentiality of another service user, there may be occasions when full details of the case may not be able to be revealed to the complainant. FM will follow good practice and relevant legislation in such cases.

8. Time-scales

Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Stage 1 - Written record of complaint and outcome to complainant within 5 working days of initial complaint.

Stage 2 - Written acknowledgement immediately on receipt of complaint. Written response within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. The response may be extended to 10 working days for a valid practical reason or to 15 working days if a meeting with the complainant is to be held. Appeal to be made by complainant within 15 working days of receipt of the decision.

Stage 3 - Acknowledgement in writing immediately on receipt of the appeal, meeting to be arranged within 10 working days of receiving the complaint or for valid practical reasons extended, if outlined to the complainant within the 10-day period. Written response of decision within 5 working days of the meeting. The maximum length of this stage is 20 working days.

N.B. 'working days' in this context refers to normal office working days i.e. Monday to Friday.

9. Withdrawal of Complaint

Complainants may withdraw their complaints at any time. This must be confirmed in writing by emailing HR@futuremen.org

10. Directing a Concern

- a. If the complaint is about a member of staff, the complaint should be addressed to that person's manager.

- b. If a concern involves the CEO please contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- c. Any Safeguarding or Child Protection concerns will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

11. External Process

- a. Children's Services-Youth Clubs can at any time use the complaints procedure of the relevant Local Authority Department.
- b. In addition, if a complaint by, or in relation to, a young person is not resolved at Stage 1 of FM procedure, it will automatically be referred to the local authority procedure. All issues of child protection will immediately be referred to DSL for review.
- c. Access to an independent advocate will be made available to a young person under the age of 16 in these circumstances

12. Complaints Procedure

This procedure will be given to all service users or be summarised in the form of an information leaflet. In addition, a copy of this procedure will be given or sent to anyone at the time they express a wish to make a complaint. Service users are entitled to be represented by an appropriate advocate at all stages of this procedure.

13. How to Make a Complaint

- a. Complaints can be made by:
 - service users
 - their representatives on their behalf
 - families, anyone who has parental responsibility or a sufficient interest in any child in a FM Youth Club
 - partner organisations, including local authorities and referral agencies
 - occupiers of properties in the immediate neighbourhood of schemes operated by FM,
 - individuals who have had contact with FM and are not satisfied with the response or service they received.
- b. Complaints can be made(at any stage of the procedure)in any of the following ways:
 - face-to-face to a member of staff
 - by telephone
 - in writing – by letter
 - in writing – by e-mail
 - in writing – using the official

- c. The aim of this procedure is to attempt to resolve complaints as close to the point of service delivery as possible. Therefore, it is recommended that in the first instance a person addresses their complaint to a member of staff with whom they have regular contact.
- d. If the member of staff feels that the complaint is outside their scope of authority to deal with, they will give information and advice to the person on how best to make their particular complaint and to whom.
- e. Whichever method is chosen to make a complaint, it is important that sufficient detail is provided for the complaint to be fully investigated. This should include details of what the complaint is about, any relevant dates, details of any witnesses, a description of the poor service received, what, if any detriment the person has suffered, whether a complaint is about a particular person or team, details of the complainant's name and address etc. Help and advice will be available from staff if needed.

14. Resolution of Complaints

a. **Stage 1 – (normally dealt with by front-line staff)**

In many situations a problem can be resolved quickly and effectively by a member of staff discussing the issue directly with the person who is making the complaint. FM encourages its staff to deal directly with complaints and to help people to express their dissatisfaction with any aspect of the service they have received. The purpose of such a discussion will be to:

- establish a common understanding of the facts;
 - attempt to find an immediate and suitable resolution;
 - apologise to the person for any inconvenience or distress suffered and thank them for bringing the issue to the attention of staff;
 - remedy the service delivery problem, if it is established that there was such a problem.
- b. If the complaint is resolved at this stage, a letter confirming the complaint, the decisions agreed upon and time-scales for any action that is to be taken should be sent to the complainant. This letter should be sent no later than 5 working days following the initial complaint.
 - c. The complaint and its outcome will be recorded in the Central Complaints Record for monitoring purposes.
 - d. If the complaint concerns a member of staff, their manager will deal with the complaint at this stage. If the complaint is about the manager or is considered to be outside the scope of the manager of the service, then the complaint will be referred to a more senior manager within the organisation to deal with at Stage 1.

This marks the end of the first stage of the complaints procedure at FM.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1 of the complaints procedure they must notify FM in writing within 15 working days of receipt of the decision.

15. **Stage 2 – (normally dealt with by the service manager)**

- a. If the complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, then it will move to Stage 2. It is preferable at this point that the complaint be in writing (letter, e-mail or on Complaints form). Staff will be available to give support and advice if needed. However, if the person complaining prefers, the complaint may be made face-to-face to the manager responsible for the service or by telephone. If the complaint is not in writing the manager should record as much detail relating to the complaint as possible and ask the complainant to sign this record at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the nature of the complaint.
- b. Where the issue is straightforward the manager will aim to provide a full written response within 5 working days. The response will explain the reasons for the decision and outline any actions, if any, and their time-scales.
- c. Where practical, the manager should meet with the service user to explain their reasons for the decision.
- d. Where the matter is more complex, the manager will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the complaint (within 48 hours of receipt of the complaint) setting out time-scales for a full response. This time-scale should be no longer than 15 working days following the receipt of the complaint at this stage.
- e. If the manager feels it is necessary to meet with the complainant to clarify any matters raised before making a formal response, then this should be arranged within the 10-day time-scale unless for some practical reason this is not possible. If this is the case the manager will write to the complainant explaining the reasons for delay and outlining an appropriate time-scale, which should not be more than an additional 5 working days other than in exceptional circumstances.
- f. It is the manager's responsibility to investigate the matter as fully as possible before responding to the complaint. This may involve interviewing any staff involved or any witnesses.
- g. The written response, which will be sent within the agreed time-scales, will explain the reasons for the decision and outline any actions, if any, and their time-scales. The letter will state the right of the complainant to appeal within 10 working days of receipt of the letter and give details of the person to whom the appeal should be addressed.

- h. Where practical, if the manager has not met with the complainant as part of the preceding process, they should now do so to explain their reasons for the decision.
- i. Details of the outcome of this stage will be recorded in the Central Complaints Record for monitoring purposes.
- j. If the original complaint concerns the manager of the service, or was dealt with by that manager at the stage 1, or the complaint is serious enough to be considered outside the scope of the manager, then it will be referred to a more senior manager within the organisation to deal with at Stage 2.

Any appeal against the decision must be made in writing within 15 working days of receipt of this decision.

16. Stage 3 – dealt with by a panel of 2 or 3 impartial people at Director level or above. A Trustee will sit on all stage 3 panels.

- a. The person nominated to deal with the appeal (Panel Convener) will arrange for a panel to meet with the complainant. The panel will be composed of three people who are not involved directly in the area from which the complaint originated. They will be in a position more senior to the person who made the decision at the previous stage. The person who made that decision will also be present to state the reasons for their decision.
- b. The composition of the panel will depend on the seriousness of the original complaint and the level at which it is necessary to hear an appeal. A Trustee will always be included on the panel.
- c. On receipt of the appeal, the Panel Convener will acknowledge receipt of the appeal in writing and arrange for the complainant to meet with the panel within 10 working days. If, for a practical reason, it is not possible to complete the process within 10 days, then the acknowledgement letter will set out the revised time-scale. This time-scale should not be longer than 20 days from the receipt of the appeal at this stage unless, for exceptional reasons, this is not possible.
- d. It is the panel's responsibility to ensure that the complainant has had adequate opportunity to put forward their case and that all facts pertaining to the complaint have been taken into consideration before making their decision.
- e. A letter will be sent to the complainant within 5 working days of the meeting, outlining the panel's decision and any action to be taken. The decision of the panel is final and marks the end of the internal process.

- f. Details of the outcome will be recorded in the Central Complaints Record for monitoring purposes.

This marks the end of the internal procedure for dealing with complaints. If the complainant is still not satisfied at this point, they may have the right in certain circumstance to appeal to an external body.

17. Links to External Documents

[Central Complaints Log](#)
[Complaints Form](#)

18. The Seven Characteristics of Positive Masculinity

	Resilience	Able to recover when things go wrong
	Inclusiveness	Open to include all different people
	Reflectiveness	Learning from things that happen to you
	Empathy	Caring for others
	Resourcefulness	Able to make the best of what you have
	Curiosity	Interested in the world around you
	Non-violence	Can solve problems without hurting others