

Feedback Policy and Procedure

This policy applies to all organisations within the Inspire North Group including Community Links and Foundation

Where we use the term Client this refers to any service user whether client or tenant

Feedback Definitions:

Complaint: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard or service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its employees, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

Complaints require a formal response, following the feedback procedure, and should be reviewed fully using Datix.

Concern: Concerns are issues which may require further enquiry, advice or information in order to resolve them. These are best dealt with by the service in which the concern originated but should still be recorded on Datix.

When a concern is raised which cannot be satisfactorily resolved without an investigation, then it is to be processed as a complaint.

An individual has the option to turn their concern into a formal complaint at any point, and employees must pro-actively give guidance on how best to do this should the complainant wish.

Compliment: A compliment is an expression of praise or admiration; this can be expressed towards an individual or service. Compliments do not require a formal response, but they are recorded in Datix as evidence of what services and individuals are doing well.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Inspire North welcomes feedback about its services and employees from current clients, prospective clients, clients who have moved on in the past 6 months, their families, friends or carers, organisations and individuals who come into contact with us, our services, or work in partnership with us.
- 1.2 We are committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone we work with. In order to do this, we need feedback about our services whether good or bad.
- 1.3 We aim to resolve any concerns or complaints efficiently, effectively and with a consistent approach. Sometimes we can put things right; sometimes we can only

explain ourselves and apologise. But we do want to learn from our mistakes and continue to improve our services.

- 1.4 We understand that many people do not see the point in complaining fearing that they will not be listened to or suffer a detriment so we expect all our employees to respond positively to concerns or complaints, taking time to listen to issues and not to respond defensively. We hope that this helps create an environment where it feels safe and acceptable to raise a complaint or concern.
- 1.5 This policy and procedure is not intended for use by employees who should use our Grievance or Whistleblowing procedures.
- 1.6 Clients and stakeholders should be made aware of how they can make a complaint, compliment or raise a concern and our leaflet (**appendix b**) should be made available within services. We should also share them via email or post when requested.
- 1.7 Accessibility: We can make the complaints leaflet available in a variety of alternative formats e.g. large print, other languages etc.
- 1.8 Feedback, whether concerns, complaints or compliments can be made in a variety of ways including:
 - Face-to-face
 - By letter
 - By completing our Feedback Form (see **appendix a**) which is also available to download or print off from our websites
 - By telephone (see websites for service phone numbers)
 - By email info@inspirenorth.co.uk
 - By using the electronic complaints forms on our websites:
www.communitylinks.co.uk
www.foundationuk.org
www.inspirenorth.co.uk
- 1.9 Complaints and incidents may take place alongside each other. All incidents should be dealt with as per the Management of Serious Incidents Policy and recorded via Datix.

2.0 Compliments and Suggestions for Improvement

- 2.1 It is great to receive compliments, even better if they are in writing. Compliments can be given direct to a worker, manager or any employee of the service. We will ensure they get passed on to the relevant employee/service.
- 2.2 When a compliment is received, we should ask the person whether they would be happy for us to use this in future reports.

2.3 We welcome any suggestions for improvements to services. We will consider any reasonable idea and if you have supplied your contact details, we will contact you to let you know if we have been able to act on your suggestion or not.

3. Complaints

Our Standards for Handling Complaints

3.1 We will treat all complaints seriously.

3.2 We will treat the complainant with courtesy and fairness at all times. We would hope they in turn will be courteous and fair in their dealings with our employees at all times.

3.3 We will treat complaints in confidence however, it is likely that in order to fully investigate a complaint the details will need to be shared with relevant employees or organisations we work in partnership with.

3.4 At any stage, the person who has made the complaint (the complainant) can have support from a friend, carer or agency (e.g. advocate). If the complainant requires support to arrange this, the worker or service manager can provide details of advocacy organisations. Interpreters can also be arranged if required.

3.5 If a complaint alleges harassment or abuse, the response will follow procedures as set out in our Safeguarding policies.

3.6 We aim to complete all complaint investigations within **20 working days** from receipt of a complaint.

3.7 If there is a possibility that the investigation may be delayed, we will inform the complainant along with the reason for the delay and an updated timeframe.

4.0 The complaints process

4.1 **When making a complaint**, we recommend the complainant includes the following information:

- Name (we can accept anonymous complaints however this removes the ability for us to respond directly to the complainant);
- Contact details including address, email and phone number;
- The service, employee and/or issue the complaint relates to;
- The details of the complaint, including any supporting documents. If there is a number of issues it is useful to list these so we can ensure we investigate each issue raised.
- The preferred outcome to the complaint; and
- The preferred way to contact the complainant.

We do have a feedback form (see **appendix a**) which can be used which helps ensure we capture all the information required.

4.2 Stages of a complaint

Inspire North have a 3-stage complaint process as follows:

4.2.1 Stage 1 – Investigating Officer: Service Manager

Each complaint is initially reviewed as a Stage 1 complaint. If the complaint is in relation to a service manager, the complaint will be allocated to an Operational Manager.

4.2.2 Stage 2 – Investigating Officer: Operational Manager

If the complainant feels the Stage 1 investigation has not considered all the relevant information, or they are dissatisfied with the outcome, they can ask for their complaint to be referred to Stage 2. This request should be made **within ten days** of receiving the response at Stage 1.

4.2.3 Stage 3 – Investigating Officer: Chief Executive

If the complainant still feels the investigation has not considered all the relevant information, or are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, they can refer their complaint to Stage 3. This request should be made **within ten days** of receiving the response at Stage 2.

4.2.4 If the Investigating Officer for any stage of complaint is unable to carry out an investigation there may be a need to appoint a similar-level, or more senior deputy. For example, if a Service Manager is on sick leave we will look to appoint a deputy to avoid a delay in responding and investigating a complaint

4.2.5 Each complaint will go through the process of:

- **Assess**
- **Acknowledge**
- **Investigate**
- **Respond**
- **Notify**
- **Learning**

4.2.5 All complaints (along with concerns and compliments) should be input into Datix. There is a User Guide on the Intranet which guides you through each step of this process.

4.3 Stage 1 and Stage 2 process:

4.3.1 **Assess:** The investigating officer will assess if the complaint raises any issue that requires immediate attention such as safeguarding concerns. Any concerns will be immediately actioned.

4.3.2 **Severity:** Each complaint will be assessed and allocated a severity level to the complaint as this will help flag issues with the appropriate level of authority.

Severity	Criteria	Notification
1	Likely to be resolved at Service level, for example an issue with a service received such as delayed appointment times. Another example would be an employee acting in an unhelpful manner.	Service Manager
2	Requires escalation to an Operational Manager due to the significant impact on the client or organisational reputational, financial or other impacts on Inspire North. Potential for legal action and notification of regulatory bodies (CQC, ICO, Commissioners etc.)	Operational Manager
3	Immediate Risk or catastrophic failure in process that could have a serious and long-term impact. Requires escalation to the Senior Leadership Team due to the severe impact on the client or organisational reputational, financial or other impacts on Inspire North. Highly probable legal action and notification of regulatory bodies (CQC, ICO, Commissioners etc.), likely to warrant press interest.	Senior Leadership Team

4.3.3 Once the Severity level has been allocated on Datix, the appropriate notification will be automatically sent. No action is required by those notified, it is to ensure they are aware that a certain level of severity complaint has been received and they can then link in with the investigating officer if they wish to know more.

4.3.4 **Acknowledge:** The complaint will be formally acknowledged by letter, or by email if this is the indicated preference, **within 3 working days** of receipt. The letter template can be found within Datix. This acknowledgement should include:

4.3.4.1 The name and contact details of the investigating officer

4.3.4.2 The timescale and deadline for a full response

4.3.4.3 An offer to meet, or speak by telephone

4.3.4.4 A copy of the complaints leaflet

4.3.5 If the complainant wishes to meet, or speak, with the investigator this should be arranged as soon as practicable, taking into account the deadline for a full response.

4.3.6 **Investigate:**

The **Stage 1** Investigation Officer will:

4.3.6.1 Review each issue contained within the complaint

4.3.6.2 Plan the scope of the investigation

4.3.6.3 Obtain and assess any relevant evidence/documentation

4.3.6.4 Interview any other parties involved i.e. employees, witnesses etc.

4.3.6.5 Keep a clear record of each action and meeting as part of the investigation

Stage 2 investigation will also include:

- 4.3.6.6 A review of the initial complaint and any further correspondence from the complainant
- 4.3.6.7 A review of the evidence and documentation gathered at Stage 1
- 4.3.6.8 A review of the outcome of the stage 1 investigation
- 4.3.6.9 Liaising with the Stage 1 Investigating Officer to ensure they are satisfied that the original complaint was understood fully, investigated thoroughly and responded to appropriately.

4.3.7 Response: The response letter can be found as a template within Datix. Our response aims to offer:

- 4.3.7.1 An acknowledgement that the complaint has been taken seriously;
- 4.3.7.2 An outline of the scope of the investigation;
- 4.3.7.3 The investigator's view of what happened and why;
- 4.3.7.4 An outline of each decision and whether each section of the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld; and
- 4.3.7.5 The right of appeal.

The response may also include any of the following as appropriate to the circumstances:

- 4.3.7.6 An apology;
- 4.3.7.7 An undertaking to learn from the complaint and to take steps to make sure such an event is not repeated (for example a review of policy or practice);
- 4.3.7.8 Compensation for any small financial loss (for example, for lost or damaged property). The Manager involved can agree an appropriate amount up to £100 with their Operational Manager or appropriate Director. Any recommendation for compensation above this amount should be referred to the Senior Leadership Team.

4.3.8 Notify: We will ensure that, if required, we will notify additional parties of any identified issues. This could include:

- 4.3.8.1 Notify any appropriate lead or department i.e. health and safety, safeguarding etc.
- 4.3.8.2 Notifying Senior Leadership of any identified concerns leading to change in best practice, policy, procedures etc.
- 4.3.8.3 **CQC registered services must notify CQC** of all incidents that affect the health, safety and welfare of people who use their services.

4.3.9 Learning: We will actively acknowledge any lessons learned in relation to any identified improvements or changes that can be shared across the Group. All complaints are recorded and reviewed via Datix; please refer to **Section 9: Monitoring and Review of compliments and complaints.**

4.4 Stage 3 process:

4.4.1 The Chief Executive or nominated deputy (i.e. a Director) will consider the way each previous stage of the complaint has been investigated and handled and make a decision as to whether the outcome is **fair and appropriate**.

4.4.2 If the Chief Executive feels that any part of the previous stages' investigations has not been fair or appropriate, they can choose to re-open the stage 2 investigation and allocate to a new Investigating Officer.

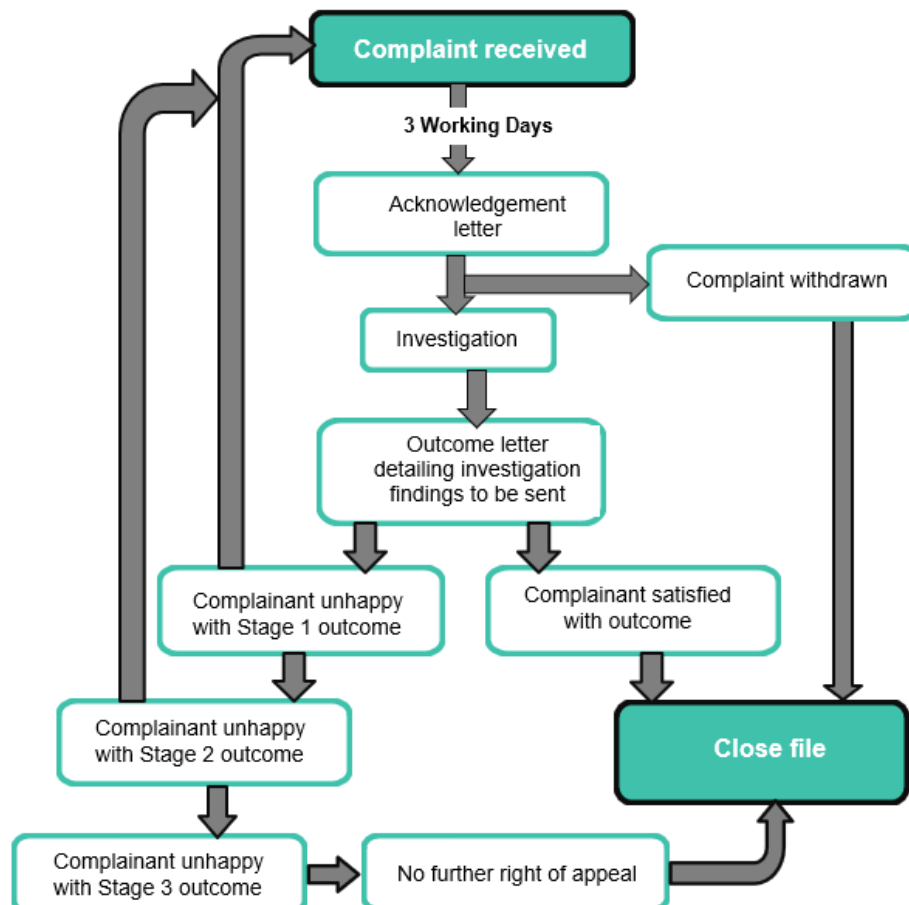
4.4.3 Where applicable, the Chief Executive will make recommendations to review or change the Group's policies or procedures.

4.4.4 The Chief Executives decision is final and there is no further right of appeal within Inspire North

4.4.5 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may wish to consider contacting the relevant service's commissioners or registration bodies such as:

- ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) www.ico.org.uk
- CQC (Care Quality Commission) www.cqc.org.uk
- Housing Ombudsman www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

4.5 Flowchart of Complaints procedure



5.0 Concerns

- 5.1 On occasion concerns may be raised outside of a formal complaint. We may feel the need to escalate a concern and investigate it as a complaint.
- 5.2 We aim to address any concern to satisfactory level. We will however record this as a concern to ensure we are able to reflect and continue to improve our services and identify any trends. This should be recorded via Datix.

6.0 Exceptions

- 6.1 Complaints will usually follow the 3-stage process, however on occasion there may be an exception to this. For example:
- 6.2 A complaint about a service manager will be re-allocated to an Operational Manager or Senior Line Manager).
- 6.3 A complaint about an Operational Manager will be re-allocated to the Director of Operations.
- 6.4 A complaint about a Director would be allocated to the Chief Executive (who would undertake the investigation as a Stage 2 complaint).
- 6.5 A complaint about the Chief Executive should be made to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

6.6 Complaints from Partners, Commissioners or Governing Bodies

- 6.6 If a complaint is received from a partner, commissioner or external governing body (i.e. CQC), this should be forwarded to the Director of Operations for assessment and allocation.
- 6.7 If a complaint is received from the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) this should be forwarded to the Information Governance Lead (Director of Operations) for assessment and allocation.
- 6.8 Complaints from the Housing Ombudsman should be sent directly to the Chief Executive.

7.0 Non-Engagement in the process

- 7.1 We will always offer the option to discuss the complaint with the Investigating Officer as part of the investigation. If the complainant has indicated that they wish to be contacted but we have been unable to reach them via the preferred method on numerous occasions, the Investigating Officer will proceed with the investigation. The Investigating Officer will then write with the outcome of the complaint.

8.0 Withdrawals

- 8.1 A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage. A formal notification will be sent to confirm the complaint has been withdrawn and the file closed.
- 8.2 It may be that the issue/s raised within the complaint should still be investigated as a matter of safety/risk. This will be decided on a case by case basis.

9.0 Abuse, Vexatious or Persistent Complaints

- 9.1 All complaints should be responded to with sympathy and patience however on occasion some complainants may take up a disproportionate amount of time and resources even when complaints have been investigated and not upheld, and all reasonable attempts have been made to resolve the complainants concerns.
- 9.2 It is important to ensure that the complaints procedure has been correctly implemented and all reasonable measures have been taken in an attempt to resolve the issue/s raised by the complainant.
- 9.3 In these instances, the complaint may be deemed as persistent or vexatious, they may even be abusive. Please note that it is recognised that referring to a complainant as "persistent" or "vexatious" may not be conducive to improving the relationship with the complainant.

9.4 Definition of a persistent or vexatious complaint, including abusive:

Complainants (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be deemed as persistent or vexatious where previous contact with them shows that they meet one or more of the following criteria. The list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the complaint/ complainant will be considered as being in this category:

- Persists in a complaint after the Inspire North Feedback (Complaints) Procedure has been fully implemented and exhausted.
- Changes the basis of a complaint, continually raises new issues or seeks to prolong contact by raising further concerns or questions upon receipt of a response to the original complaint. Please note that care must be taken not to discard new issues which may be significantly different from the original complaint and might need to be addressed as separate complaints or accounted for as part of the investigation.
- Makes the same complaint repeatedly, perhaps with minor differences, after the complaints procedure has been concluded, and insists that the minor differences make these 'new' complaints which should be put through the full complaints procedure.
- Is unwilling to accept documented evidence as being factual e.g. drug records or nursing and medical notes despite investigation.

- Refuses to accept the outcome of the complaint procedure after its conclusion, repeatedly arguing the point, complaining about the outcome, and/or denying that an adequate response has been given.
- Refuses to accept that it may be difficult to verify facts if a long period of time has elapsed since the event(s) in question took place.
- Does not clearly identify the precise issues they would like to be investigated despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to engage with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Harasses, threatens, verbally abuses or seeks to intimidate an employee, agency worker or the Investigating Officer.
- Is known to have recorded meetings or conversations without the prior knowledge or consent of the other parties involved.
- Denies statements he or she made at an earlier stage in the complaint process.

9.5 Where the complaint / complainant has been identified as being persistent, vexatious or abusive, in accordance with one of the criteria outlined above, the Operational Managers may review the case and make a decision as to how future correspondence will be dealt with. It may be necessary to obtain legal advice before a decision is made.

9.6 If required, the complainant will be informed in writing of the need to take this decision and why. A code of behaviour may be drawn up to agree future expectations of behaviour for Inspire North to continue to support the client, if they are currently in receipt of support from an Inspire North service. This may include requiring the complainant to communicate in a particular way e.g. in writing only, or with a designated employee and this will be identified within their online client record.

10.0 Monitoring and Review of Feedback

10.1 All compliments, complaints and concerns will be reported within Datix.

10.2 Data around complaints and concerns within Datix will enable Inspire North to review how complaints are handled and if any trends are emerging. These reports will be shared with the quarterly Operations and Development Sub Committee.

10.2 We will also be able to check the quality and consistency of our response across Inspire North.

10.3 Diversity Monitoring

10.3.1 As part of the feedback form, we have included a section on Diversity which we encourage everyone to complete.

10.3.2 This data will be reviewed for the sole purpose of ensuring anti-discriminatory practice and to monitor accessibility of our services and our complaints process.

10.4 Retention of Feedback

10.4.1 Any complaints within a client file will be destroyed in line with the retention and destruction schedule for the related service.

Feedback Form

If you wish to remain anonymous please do go straight to the next section "I am writing to": Please note this will leave us unable to contact you to discuss your complaint or outcome			<input type="checkbox"/>	
Name:		Date of Birth (if current or ex-client)		
Address:				
Email:		Phone No.:		
Preferred method of contact:	Post: <input type="checkbox"/>	Email: <input type="checkbox"/>	Phone: <input type="checkbox"/>	
I am writing to:	Raise a concern <input type="checkbox"/>	Make a complaint <input type="checkbox"/>	Give a compliment <input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of Service (your feedback is in relation to)				
Name/s of any employees your feedback is in relation to				
Please indicate your relationship with the service (tick)	Current client / Resident <input type="checkbox"/>	Ex-client / Ex-Resident <input type="checkbox"/>	Family member / Carer <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please see below) <input type="checkbox"/>
If other, please provide details here				
Details of your feedback (In relation to a concern or complaint) If you wish to raise a number of issues, it is useful to list there so we can ensure we investigate each issue raised.				

For Compliments only: Where you have taken the time to pay us a compliment about one of our services or employees we would love to pass this on, we may even want to showcase this in external publications. Are you happy for us to do this? (it will always be anonymous) Should you no longer wish us to use your comments in publications, please send an email to informationgovernance@inspirenorth.co.uk		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Section for Complaints only			
Would you like to meet / speak with the Investigating Officer?	Yes (in person) <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (by phone) <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Have you previously raised this as a complaint or concern? (For concerns or complaints only)	Yes (concern / part of feedback) <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (complaint) <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
What would you like the outcome of your complaint to be?			
Do you have anything additional you wish to be taken in consideration?			

To return this form you can either:

Scan and email it to info@inspirenorth.co.uk

Hand it in at your service

Post – this is a freepost address (no stamp required) please address the envelope as follows:

Freepost RTCA-TUXU-YRYR
 Inspire North
 3 Limewood Way
 LEEDS
 LS14 1AB

Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form

We aim to ensure that all complainants are treated fairly, irrespective of colour, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, physical or learning disability, age or religion.

To help us ensure that no one everyone is treated fairly, please fill out the following sections, which will be used for monitoring purposes only.

White	English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British <input type="checkbox"/>	Black / Black British	African <input type="checkbox"/>
	Irish <input type="checkbox"/>		Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/>
	Gypsy or Irish Traveller <input type="checkbox"/>		Other <input type="checkbox"/>
	Other <input type="checkbox"/>		
Asian / Asian British	Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups	White and Asian <input type="checkbox"/>
	Chinese <input type="checkbox"/>		White and Black African <input type="checkbox"/>
	Indian <input type="checkbox"/>		White and Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/>
	Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/>		Other <input type="checkbox"/>
	Other <input type="checkbox"/>		
Other Ethnic Group	Arab <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Other <input type="checkbox"/>		
	I would prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/>		

Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
	Indeterminate <input type="checkbox"/>	Transgender <input type="checkbox"/>
	Agender <input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Binary <input type="checkbox"/>
	I would prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/>	

Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual or Straight <input type="checkbox"/>	Gay <input type="checkbox"/>
	Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/>	Lesbian <input type="checkbox"/>
	Other sexual orientation not listed <input type="checkbox"/>	I would prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/>

Religion	Buddhist <input type="checkbox"/>	Christian – All dominations <input type="checkbox"/>
	Hindu <input type="checkbox"/>	Jewish <input type="checkbox"/>
	Muslim <input type="checkbox"/>	Sikh <input type="checkbox"/>
	I would prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/>	