

Policies and Procedures

Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments

This policy outlines our commitment to dealing with complaints about the services we provide. It also provides information about how we manage, respond to and learn from complaints made about our services.

Autism Plus aims to:

- Encourage all feedback, in order to help us learn and improve
- To keep people informed of how their complaint is progressing
- To teach staff how to resolve complaints quickly
- To respect the confidentiality of the complaint and complainant
- To record, monitor and report on complaints received

Purpose

- Autism Plus operates an effective mechanism for the receipt, recording, investigation and resolution of all complaints, in order to comply with regulations and best practice.
- The arrangements for investigation of complaints are fair and transparent.
- Complaints and suggestions from customers or their relatives or others are a valued source of information regarding the quality of our service, and are a primary source of information regarding possible abuse.
- Care Quality Commission and Local Government Ombudsman guidelines are adhered to.

Scope

- Persons
- Relatives
- Other professionals outside agencies
- All employees

Policy

- In all cases complaints and concerns shall be treated seriously in a sensitive and confidential manner.
- Complaints and suggestions must be handled in such a way as to first of all reach a satisfactory outcome with the complainant, and to turn a potentially difficult and damaging problem into a source of quality improvement.
- Autism Plus actively encourages anyone who is not happy with our services or staff to make contact with us. Autism Plus support the informal and local resolution of concerns and issues so that not all issues escalate to formal complaints. Where issues and concerns cannot be resolved and addressed informally by way of communication and appropriate remedial action then the formal complaint route and response requirements will be followed.
- A copy of this complaints procedure will be
 - o Clearly visible in public areas of our registered addresses;
 - o Sent out with all contracts, and;
 - o Included in the welcome pack to the people we support, (an easy read version is also available)
 - o On the Autism Plus website and intranet.
- All formal or serious complaints will be investigated by a person not related to the immediate source of the complaint.
- Complaints will be recorded centrally in order to identify any pattern of complaint relating to all or a group of persons. This record will contain minor complaints in addition to serious complaints.
- The central information, with regards to complaints, suggestions and compliments, will be regularly reviewed and analysed. The summary will be regularly considered by Management for quality assurance purposes.
- Compliments will be recorded centrally and made available for all parties to read, also on the personnel file of any member of staff individually complimented.
- Employees who are the subject of a complaint should not communicate directly with the complainant unless accompanied by a senior member of staff.
- Where the complaint gives rise to concerns regarding the wellbeing of one or more persons, serious consideration must be given to suspension of the person or persons complained about, and an investigation must be initiated immediately in order to identify any risk to the health and welfare of the persons involved.

Next review: 20/05/2021

Next review: 20/05/2021

Procedure

Standard Arrangements

- There are several distinct levels of dealing with a complaint, and it is important for the speedy and effective resolution that each level is followed.
- The principles applied are:
 - o The nearer the person dealing with the complaint is to direct service delivery, the better the likely outcome of the complaint. That person has a better detailed knowledge of the service and can react quickly and appropriately. An exception to this principle will be made in the case of a complaint which alleges abuse, in which case the complaint will be immediately and directly reported to a senior manager. At this point the safeguarding policy should be followed as per local authority advice and the necessary notification made to the CQC.
 - o Accepting that personalities can be a factor in complaints, the multiple stages allow this problem to be avoided.
 - o Complaints and suggestions will in all cases be taken seriously, recorded, their practicality/ usefulness investigated, and the instigator informed of the decided outcome.
- A Registered Manager, a Head of Service or a HR Manager will be responsible for dealing with complaints.
- Autism Plus will respond to complaints both by email and in writing. Telephone conversations are not sufficient in themselves, as they do not constitute a proper record however they can be logged in writing as having taken place.
- We will update the complainant in writing about progress during the investigation.
- Investigations and outcomes will be recorded on the complaints form.
- All employees are informed that written complaint recording rules must be complied with, and those records held where they are freely available to Managers. Any attempt to conceal a complaint may give rise to formal disciplinary action.
- The complainant will be requested to examine the written records of the complaint.
- A continued disagreement which cannot be resolved internally, the complainant will be advised to approach an appropriate external authority, such as the CQC, funding authorities such as Social Services or NHS, an independent advocacy service, or the local government Ombudsman.
- For privately funded persons a range of advocacy services are available. The Manager should support the person to contact an appropriate independent advocate if the person shows any signs of being unable to fully make, or further pursue, the complaint.
- The completed complaints form will then be handed to the Registered Manager for permanent filing, centrally and on the persons' file. The Head of Service will hold a central file containing or complaints and compliments for the region they are responsible for.
- Autism Plus will periodically review all complaints since the previous review in order to identify trends and matters which may have appeared to be relatively minor at the time, but which indicate a deeper problem.
- The services action plan should be updated to include all actions to be taken to resolve any requirements or recommendations made following any investigation.

Next review: 20/05/2021

Written Procedure

A complaint can be made: by telephone; in writing; by email; or in person. All responses will be followed up in writing (preferably email)

Complaints can be made to:

Autism Plus Doncaster
Fieldside Court
3 Field Road
Thorne
Sheffield
Doncaster
DN8 4AG
01405 812128
info@autismplus.co.uk

or

Autism Plus Sheffield
Exchange brewery
2 Bridge Street
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S3 8NS
01143 840284

or

Autism Plus Hull and North Yorkshire
Ings Plus Centre
Savoy Road
Ings
Hull
HU8 0TX

01482 714361
Info@autismplus.co.uk

Next review: 20/05/2021

Complainants will receive an acknowledgment within three working days. In this acknowledgment the complainant will be informed who will be investigating the complaint.

- Autism Plus will accept complaints from a third party when:
 - o The person has consented, either verbally or in writing, or;
 - o The person cannot complain unaided and cannot give consent because they lack capacity within the the Mental Capacity Act 2005; and
 - o The representative is acting in the person's best interests

We aim to complete investigations within 28 days, in some cases however this may take longer, and we will inform the complainant of the expected timescale.

Complainants have the right to refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if they are unhappy with the outcome of the investigation. The complainant also has the right to alert the Care Quality Commission.

T: 0300 061 0614

Autism Plus is registered with and regulated by the CQC. The CQC cannot get involved in individual complaints about providers, but is happy to receive information about our services at any time. You can contact the CQC at:

Care Quality Commission (CQC)
National Correspondence
Citygate, Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA
Tel: 03000 616161
Fax: 03000 616171
03000 616161

Complaints not covered by this policy

- A complaint made by an employee regarding their employment. This will be dealt with under the Autism Plus Grievance Procedure.
- A complaint that has already been investigated and resolved.
- In these circumstances we will, as soon as possible, notify the complainant of the decision not to investigate the complaint and the reasons why.

Next review: 20/05/2021