Release
Drugs, The Law & Your Rights

How to complain about a service we provide.

Release hopes that everyone coming into contact with the service will find it reliable, informative and helpful.

It is, however, recognised that not only will there always be room for improvement if we are to maintain the highest possible standards of service, but there may also be occasions when the standard of advice or the manner in which it is given may fall short of our commitment to our clients' needs. We therefore believe that it is vitally important that we have an open and accessible Complaints Procedure in order to ensure that we are able to respond to comments by our clients, and continue to work towards the enhancement of the overall quality of our service.

This Complaints Procedure seeks to set out a framework in which this can be achieved.
If you want to complain about a service we provide we will ensure that your complaint is:

- given full consideration
- managed with completeimpartiality

Complaints, should the circumstances allow, are often better resolved by raising the issue (either in writing or verbally) directly with the advisor concerned (or through an advocate or friend with written authorisation to act on your behalf). The resolution of the issue can often be swift and to the satisfaction of all concerned. A note of the complaint raised will be recorded by the advisor and the resolution achieved.

If the matter cannot be resolved as outlined above then the process below should be adopted within three months of the initial issue arising, where possible include:

- the specific nature of the complaint including where possible date andtime;
- any documentation/correspondence you wish to be considered as part of your complaint;
- the remedy you are seeking.

To make a complaint please email admin@release.org.uk or call 020 7324 2979 and you will be provided with name of the manager to contact to progress the matter.

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Stage 1 Review:

A stage 1 review will consider the following:

- complaints about the standard of service experienced and/or
- dissatisfaction with a course of action taken and/or
- the outcome achieved.

1. In the first instance, someone who has not handled the original case will look fairly and impartially at the concerns. Wherever possible, they will be at a more senior level than the original advisor, and in normal circumstances will be the Head of the advisor's service.
2. Lodging the complaint can either be in writing or verbally communicated to the Head of the service concerned, and if this is submitted by an advocate or friend then we will also need written authorisation from the client.
3. Once received the complaint will be reviewed and investigated within 10 working days of receipt. Should the review or investigation warrant more time this will be communicated to the client in the first instance, and an extension of time will have to be mutually agreed.
4. Should no mutual extension of time be agreed then the review and investigation will be based solely upon the information available.
5. The client will be informed of the result of their complaint in writing which will include:
    - the conclusions from the review and investigation
    - the reasons for the outcome
6. The possible outcomes of a complaint include, but are not limited to:
    - no further action
    - apologising
    - informal action against staff member involved
    - disciplinary proceedings against staff member involved
    - action taken to improve charity performance

Stage 2 Review:

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 Review, they have 20 working days (from the date of the written outcome of the initial complaint), in which they can ask for the complaint to be reviewed by the Board of Trustees. This stage 2 review will focus on how the first review was processed and the information considered at the time, looking particularly at whether it:

- addressed the issues of the complaint
- adequately remedied any shortfalls in service
- articulated the outcome adequately
- was sufficiently thorough and fair

The Board of Trustees will aim to let the complainant know their outcome within 20 working days and any decision by the Board of Trustees will be treated as the final decision in the matter.

If any person is unhappy with the outcome of the complaint or the service they have received related to a legal service they can at any time complain to the Solicitor's Regulatory Authority and/or the Charity Commission and/or the Legal Service's Ombudsman. For all other services complaints should be directed to the Charity Commission.