

FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Definition

Feedback from clients is an important source of information for Sue Lambert Trust (SLT). This information can help SLT to improve its services and the way in which they are delivered. Feedback includes the following:

- Comments from clients on their views of the services they have received – these can be compliments or the client's perspective on the service they have received
- Suggestions from clients on how services can be improved – this will be where clients have ideas as to how the service can be improved or developed
- Complaints from clients – this will be where clients are unhappy with the service they have received, or have a concern

This Policy sets out how SLT will encourage feedback from clients, and how it will review the feedback received and use it to develop its services.

2. Key aims and principles

SLT believes that clients have a key role to play in developing its services, and that clients should be encouraged to give their views, with these views being taken into account when delivering services.

SLT wishes to ensure the following:

- That it encourages clients to give feedback, or to complain when they feel appropriate
- That it will have appropriate processes in place to gain feedback and will promote these to clients
- That staff and volunteers know how to support clients wishing to comment or complain
- That staff and volunteers support this policy and understand the expectations on them to deliver it
- That all feedback and complaints will be reviewed in an objective manner
- That feedback will be dealt with promptly
- That clients will be contacted to confirm the response to their feedback (if requested)
- That no-one raising a complaint will be treated less favourably as a result of the complaint

3. Processes

3.1 Comments/suggestions

SLT will use the following methods to encourage clients to give their views:

- Suggestion box will be placed in the building, with feedback forms available
- Via the Charity's website – the website will encourage people to give their views using a feedback email address
- Clients will be asked to give their feedback on the process at the end of the counselling – they will be given a form which can be completed. Alternatively a member of staff can complete the form with the client over the phone if requested.

Feedback can be anonymous if preferred by the client. If the client prefers to be given a response to their comments then SLT will commit to responding to them within 10 working days.

3.2 Complaints

Clients will be supported to raise issues if they feel that the service they have received is of poor quality, or if there are any specific issues that they wish to raise. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

The following is in place to manage complaints:

- Information about the Feedback Policy and the Complaints procedures will be made available in SLT offices and on the SLT website
- A complaints form to be completed (clients will be advised that an independent member of staff or volunteer can help them to complete a complaint if they wish)
- All complaints will be kept confidential as far as possible – although it is likely that if the complaint relates to a volunteer or member of staff that person will need to be made aware of the nature of the complaint so that they can respond to the issues raised
- Safeguarding principles will apply – and that whilst all efforts will be made to keep the complaint confidential where possible, other agencies may be notified on a need to know basis should there be a risk of harm to an individual or risk of crime
- No-one will be treated less favourably as a result of raising a complaint
- Complaints can be made via the SLT website
- All complaints will be logged
- All complaints will be referred to the Chief Executive, and the Chief Executive will allocate the case to the Operations Manager or Clinical Lead depending on the nature of the complaint
- The Operations Manager or the Clinical Lead will then have responsibility for investigating the complaint. This will include:
 - Contacting the client and discussing the matter either face to face or by telephone depending on the clients preference
 - Establishing the facts of the case, and considering any negative impacts on the client
 - Considering the following:
 - Whether any negative impacts can be remedied
 - Whether an apology is appropriate
 - Whether the service can be improved or changed to prevent a recurrence
 - Whether a disciplinary investigation should be undertaken to investigate the actions of a member of staff or volunteer
 - Confirming the outcome of the investigation in writing to the client (note that if disciplinary investigation is recommended then this will be confirmed to the client, but no details of the investigation or its outcome will be reported to the client)

3.3 Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will be logged. However they will not usually be acted upon unless:

- There is concern for the safety of an individual or the risk of a crime
- Complaints relating to the same issue have been previously logged

Anonymous complaints will be investigated as above, with the facts being established as far as possible without the complainant involvement in the process.

4. Training and communication

SLT is committed to ensuring that staff and volunteers are aware of this Policy and the processes that support it. To ensure this SLT will:

- Include details of the Feedback Policy and procedures within the staff and volunteer induction processes
- Include details of Policy and procedures requirements in twice yearly staff and volunteer training days
- Provide Policy updates at group supervision meetings

5. Monitoring and Review

5.1 Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually bi-annually

5.2 Policy Monitoring

Performance against this Policy will be monitored by the Management Team with updates going to the Board. The following information will be reported on and monitored:

- Training and communication of this Policy
- Data regarding the number of complaints made and the outcomes
- Data regarding responses made to clients
- Any service changes made as a result of suggestions, comments or complaints

6. Related guidance, policy and procedures

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Complaints Record Form
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Disciplinary Procedures