

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

As required by the Management Committee, The Advice Centre has established this procedure for dealing with complaints from clients, so that we can resolve as many as possible within the centre.

Some of the complaints against the Centre will be well founded. We all make mistakes and so the best approach is one of honesty and realism when problems arise. Complaints must be dealt with sympathetically and quickly. Our reputation depends on this, as it is all part of our "Quality Service".

Central Register of Complaints

In the absence of the Chairperson, another Committee Member will be delegated to deputise and may also substitute in the procedure set out below in appropriate circumstances.

Procedure

Preliminary Stage

- The complaint should be received either via e-mail to Sandra.mayo@stannasadvice.org.uk, letter, in person or by telephone. An advisor must alert their line manager if a client has made it known that they are unhappy with the service regardless of whether they state that they want to make a formal complaint.
- A complaint form must be completed by the client if formal complaint or by the Complaints Officer if via staff member.
- The Complaints Officer is responsible for entering the complaint in the Central Register. Sandra Mayo has been appointed Complaints Officer from April 2025.

Stage 1

- The Complainant should be invited to speak to the Complaints Officer. This can be done in person or by phone, whichever is appropriate.
- The Complaints Officer should keep a record of the conversation on client's complaint form.
- The Complaints Officer will endeavour to resolve the matter.

Stage 1 should be completed within 7 working days of receiving the complaint.

Stage 2

- The Complainant should be asked, if not already done so, to put their complaint in writing to the Complaints Officer, providing as much detail of the complaint as possible.
- The Complaints Officer will ensure that all Complainants receive a response in writing within 10 working days of the letter/complaint note being issued.
- This letter will summarise what action will be taken including any disciplinary matters which arise and/or any corrective action relating to the Advice Centre's procedure.
- the Complaints Officer will record on the Central File the action agreed and shall file with

the original complaint a copy of the response to the client.

If a response by letter is unsuitable the complainant will be offered an interview with the manager to provide the response verbally. This meeting will be held within 10 working days. A written record of this interview will be kept and signed by the Complainant. If the Complainant is not satisfied, they should ask the matter to be dealt with under stage 3.

Stage 3

Where the matter is not resolved by stage 2, the Manager should immediately refer the complaint to the Chair of the Management Committee with copies of all written correspondence being sent to the Committee.

The Complainant will be informed immediately by the Manager that the above action is taking place, and the panel will also be contacting the worker against whom the complaint is made.

The Chair will review the decision made at Stage 2 and may seek further clarification from any of the parties involved.

The Chair will notify the Management Committee of their reason and decision within 15 working days of having received notice of the complaint.

The Management Committee decision will be final. The manager is responsible for ensuring records of the meeting are kept and complaints monitoring form is completed.

12.7 Corrective Action

Following a substantiated complaint, corrective action will be taken. The circumstances vary considerably, and the action required must be appropriate to the relevant facts. Any action taken relating to an individual staff member will be through the Advice Centre's disciplinary procedure.

The Chairperson will prepare a report yearly on complaint trends with a view to making recommendations to the Management Committee, or improvements which should be made to prevent the recurrence of complaints.

If the unresolved complaint relates to a debt or financial matter and falls within the jurisdiction of the Financial Ombudsman Service, the complainant will be notified in writing the processes of taking their matter further with the financial ombudsman service.