

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Date of Review: November 2018

Date of Next Review: November 2019

Chief Executive Officer's Signature:  Robert Treen

1. Aims of the procedure

These are to:

- Provide an effective means for people using our services and their families/representatives to comment or to have a complaint resolved.
- Ensure complaints are dealt with in a courteous and efficient manner and are resolved as quickly as possible.
- Obtain information about the public's perceptions of Accuro and the services it provides, so that these can then be taken into account in the way future services are provided.
- Arrange, where appropriate, independent consideration of complaints if there is dissatisfaction with the organisation's response.
- Enable people who use the service and/or their parents or carers to make complaints with the assistance of an advocate if required.

2. Definition

A complaint is defined as any communication received by Accuro that is critical about a service and/or a member of staff or volunteer.

Complaints may be both informal or formal. Both must be recorded fully and accurately and must be responded to.

This policy applies to complaints raised by individuals who are not Accuro employees and volunteers.

3. Who can make a complaint?

- Any person receiving a service and/or their parent or representative.
- Any person acting as a volunteer on behalf of Accuro
- Any person whose application to become a volunteer with the organisation is rejected.
- Anyone having sufficient interest in the welfare of a person receiving services from Accuro.

4. Recording

It is essential to record all complaints and the action taken in response to them. A copy of these records should be kept on the file of the service user/volunteer to whom the complaint relates. In the case of a complaint against a member of staff a copy of the record will also be kept on that persons personnel file.

5. Procedures

There are three stages:

1. Informal complaint.
2. Activation of the formal complaints procedure
3. Panel hearing

5.1 Informal Complaints

Involves 1:1 resolution with the person making the complaint.

Members of staff need to explore and listen to the complainant's views, even though these could relate directly to them as agents of Accuro. The opportunity to resolve the dissatisfaction/disagreement should then be placed with the workers line manager.

The line manager should ensure that every effort is made to resolve the concerns at this informal stage. This will be beneficial to the person making the complaint and also save staff time. The recording of information should be in writing.

Every opportunity must be taken at this stage to come to an agreeable solution with the complainant and/or their representative. Complainants should be advised that they are entitled to have the support of an advocate /representative.

If the dissatisfaction/disagreement is not resolved at this stage the complainant should be advised, in writing, that the formal complaints procedure will be invoked.

5.2 Activation of formal complaints procedure.

The Chief Executive or Chairperson will acknowledge the complaint has been registered within five working days, and send a letter detailing the complaint to the complainant to check that it has been recorded accurately. Complaints should be responded to in easily understandable style. In the case of a complainant who is not able to read consideration should be given to responding in a different manner, e.g. by using audiotapes.

The Chairperson is responsible for appointing a member of staff or of the Board of Trustees to act as the Investigating Officer. This task will normally be delegated to the Chief Executive. However, no person will be appointed as the Investigating Officer if they are the subject of that complaint.

The Investigating Officer will gather together relevant information from complainant, families, carers, staff etc. and will report back their findings to the Chairperson. The Chairperson will then write to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation (referring to any course of action that is to be taken) within 28 days of the registration of the complaint. Should this not be feasible an interim response must be provided within this timescale with a full response within two months.

5.3 Panel Hearings

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2 (as detailed in the response they will receive) the complainant may ask the Chairperson of Accuro, either verbally or in writing, within 28 days of receipt of the response letter to arrange for a Panel Hearing to review the response of Accuro to the complaint.

The hearing must take place within 28 days of the receipt of a request for a hearing.

The Panel will comprise of three people. The Chairperson of the panel must be an independent person, i.e. not a member or officer of Accuro. The other two persons may be members of Accuro, independent people or a combination of the two.

The complainant must be notified, in writing, at least 10 days in advance of the time and the venue. Information should be provided to the complainant, and any representatives, regarding the procedures of the panel and the names and status of the panel members. This will include details of their right to make written statements in advance and to make oral submissions at the meeting, and also details of how the hearing will be conducted.

Written statements should be forwarded to the chair of the panel at least 7 days before the hearing to allow them to be distributed to other panel members.

Complainants have the right to be accompanied to the panel by another person.

The conduct of the hearing will be as informal as possible and it will be the responsibility of the Chairperson to ensure this. The Chairperson will explain at the outset how the hearing will be conducted and will make reference to the confidentiality of the proceedings.

The Panel will be required to report its recommendations to the Chairperson of Accuro within three working days of the hearing together with the reasons for its recommendations. The Chair of Accuro must then decide on how to respond to the recommendations and communicate their response, in writing, to the complainant within 21 days of the date of the hearing.

6. Support and advocacy

It is important that Accuro should offer assistance and guidance to the complainant (or their representative) on the use of this procedure or to suggest where such advice might be obtained. Advocacy may play an important role in achieving this.

A complainant is entitled to have an advocate assist him/her to define and progress the complaint at all stages of this procedure. Advocates may be members of Accuro (but not staff) or people who are not connected with Accuro. If the advocate is a member of Accuro it is important to verify that this is the complainants wish and that the member is content to act in this role.

Complainants might prefer to have advocates who are independent of Accuro and information about where this might be obtained should be given.

There may also be situations where staff may need support and advice as a result of a complaint having been made. The most likely organisations to provide this are Trades Unions or Professional Associations. However in situations where someone is conducting a formal investigation other than the persons line manager it may be appropriate for the line manager to provide advice and support.

7. Other requirements relating to complaints.

- 7.1** A report shall be submitted to the Trustees, by the Chief Executive or Chairperson on any complaints received and of the actions taken in response.
- 7.2** Accuro will provide an explanatory leaflet made available to users of the service and carers. This leaflet needs to be produced using straightforward language.
- 7.3** It should be remembered that many people who use services might find it difficult to voice their complaints. Giving the complainant the opportunity to discuss a concern when it first arises will increase the chances of resolving the matter there and then.
- 7.4** These procedures will be reviewed annually.

- 7.5** In relation to services provided by Accuro people wishing to make a complaint have a right of access to external bodies to whom they may forward their concerns. Please see details below:

Charity Commission

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

Charity Commission,
P. O. Box 211,
Bootle,
L20 7YX.

Telephone number: 0300 0669197