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Markfield

Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Policy and Procedures

Markfield
Markfield Road
London
N15 4RB
020 8800 4134
Registered Charity No: 289904
Limited Company No: 1693876

Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions

Policy Statement

Markfield aims to achieve high standards in everything we do. We welcome all feedback about our services, whether positive or negative. We would like to hear from you when we do something well, or you have a suggestion about something we could do better.

We recognise we don't always get things right. When things go wrong we want to know, so we can put them right and learn from our mistakes. If you tell us about any problems or things you don't like, you help us make things better for everyone. We believe people have a right to tell us about concerns and problems and should be treated sensitively and with respect when they do this.

We recognise you may be worried about raising concerns, particularly if you need to raise an alert about bad practice. This policy is designed to help you raise any concerns at an early stage. We will always try to resolve difficulties informally, but in some circumstances you may wish to make a formal complaint. Markfield will aim to resolve all complaints promptly and sensitively. We will do whatever we can to make sure that raising concerns and making complaints does not cause you further difficulties.

This policy and procedures can be used by service users, workers, volunteers, people on placement and visitors at Markfield. We will always make sure new service users, workers, volunteers, and people on placement are given information about these procedures, and a copy will always be displayed at Markfield so visitors know how to use them.

Markfield will review and update these policies and procedures every 3 years. The review of this policy will be led by the Adult Projects Manager with the involvement of staff and Executive Committee members.

Giving feedback and suggestions

If you would like to give us feedback about our services, either positive or negative, or suggestions for how they could be improved, we really welcome your ideas. You can do this in lots of ways:

- talk directly to one of the Markfield staff
- telephone us on 0208 800 4134 and ask for the member of staff you want to speak to (or any member of staff if you do not know who to ask for)
- write to us (our address is on the front of this policy)
- email us on enquiries@markfield.org.uk

When you should use Markfield's complaints procedures

Use this procedure:

- if you are unhappy about the way Markfield has done its job in providing services
- if you are concerned about other bad practice eg. failure to meet our legal obligations; financial bad practice; putting people such as service users, the public, staff or volunteers at risk.

Sometimes your concerns may be dealt with under another Markfield procedure. For example, concerns where children or vulnerable adults are at risk will be dealt with through our Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy; complaints about decisions or treatment by colleagues may be dealt with through our Disciplinary and Grievance Policy. You don't need to worry about deciding what procedure to use. If you are concerned, use this complaints procedure and the person investigating the complaint will work out if a different policy needs to be followed.

Who can use Markfield's complaints procedures

Anyone concerned about the way Markfield has done its job in providing services, or who has a genuine concern about bad practice by Markfield or Markfield staff, volunteers, or people on placement may use the Complaints procedures to raise their concern.

Markfield expects staff, volunteers and people on placement to report any reasonable and genuine concerns about our standards; practice; theft or fraud; financial bad practice; abuse of service users; breach of legal obligations; or the cover up of any of these. Failure to report concerns or complaints may be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Raising concerns informally

If you have a complaint or concern, it will often be possible to resolve the problem informally, by simply talking to the person concerned. If that feels too difficult you can talk informally to a Markfield manager or the Director.

Markfield is committed to keeping an open and regular dialogue with service users. Staff, volunteers, and people on placement are expected to listen to people's concerns, take them seriously, and try to find an immediate solution.

When you should use the formal complaints procedures

You should use the formal complaints procedures if you have raised your concern informally and you are still unhappy with the solution, or if you feel the concern is too serious to be dealt with informally.

Formal complaints procedures:

Stage One:

a) Contact the Director about your complaint. You can do this:

- by telephone: 020 8800 4134 ext 5225
- by post: Director, Markfield, Markfield Road, London N15 4RB. Write "Private and Confidential" on the envelope and this will only be opened by the Director
- by email: smiller@markfield.org.uk

If your concern is about the Director, contact the Administrator and tell them you want to talk to a member of the Executive Committee about your complaint. They will pass your details to the Executive Committee who will contact you.

If it is easier for you, you can record your complaint on a tape and send it in, or ask a friend or advocate to make the complaint on your behalf.

When you tell us about your complaint, please try to include relevant names, dates, and any other important information about your complaint. It is also helpful if you say what action you would like to be taken to resolve the issue.

When we receive your complaint we will try to sort out the problem straight away. If we can't, we will investigate your complaint as quickly as possible. Formal complaints will be investigated by the Director, or a staff member nominated by them. Formal complaints about the Director will be investigated by Markfield's Executive Committee. They will nominate one member of the Executive Committee to be the person who investigates the complaint.

b) The person investigating your complaint will let you know as soon as possible that they have received your complaint. They must definitely do this **within two working days of receiving your complaint**. They will send you a copy of this complaints policy at this point.

c) The person investigating your complaint will find out more about your complaint. They may contact you to find out more details about your concern if it is not completely clear from your initial phone call or letter. You will not be

expected to prove the truth of the concerns you are raising, but you will need to be able to explain why you have grounds for concern. The person investigating the complaint will also contact anyone named in the complaint, so that they can give their point of view.

If the person investigating the complaint believes that it should be dealt with under different procedures (eg Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults, or Grievance Procedure), they will tell you this and make sure you understand what will happen next.

The person investigating your complaint will write a report of their investigation and recommendations. They will make sure you get a copy of this. A copy will also be given to any staff named in the complaint. The report will include recommendations for dealing with the complaint, and for any changes needed in Markfield's policies, procedures or practice which have emerged from the investigation.

The person investigating the complaint will make sure you understand the report and its recommendations. Sometimes they will suggest meeting with you to go through it. They may suggest arranging a meeting between you and any other people named in your complaint, if that feels like a good way to discuss and resolve the problems. Meetings about complaints can feel really difficult. You might like to have a friend, relative, or advocate with you at the meeting. This must be someone who is not involved in the situation, and they will have to agree to keep anything discussed in the meeting confidential.

We will aim to complete investigations of complaints and make recommendations **within 20 working days of acknowledging your complaint**. If there is any delay we will contact you to explain this.

Stage Two: Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint you can make an appeal. You must tell us you want to appeal **within 14 days of receiving the complaint investigation report**. You must explain why you feel the recommendations are not satisfactory.

Appeals will always be heard by the Executive Committee. They will nominate up to two members to consider the appeal. If a member of the Executive Committee investigated the original complaint, they will not be on the appeal panel.

The appeal will be considered **within 20 working days of receiving your request for an appeal**. If we cannot meet within this timescale we will let you know. The panel will look at your original complaint and the complaint investigation report. They may also talk to you, the person who investigated the complaint, and other people involved. The panel will make written recommendations **within five working days of their appeal panel meeting**. You will be given a copy of these and the panel will do their best to ensure that you understand them.

Markfield's procedure ends at this point.

What next?

We hope that concerns can be resolved within these procedures but we are aware that you may not be satisfied with the result. If you are unhappy with the appeal panel's decision you can contact the organisations who register and regulate some of Markfield's services. Their contact details are given below:

Haringey Council: (they commission some of our services for adults with learning disabilities and some of our services for children and young people).

For complaints relating to services for adults:

- Haringey Council Adults, Culture and Community Services Complaints 020 8489 3398

For complaints relating to services for children and young people:

- Haringey Council Children and Young People Service Complaints 020 8489 3481/ 3187

Ofsted: This is the organisation that regulates our childcare services for children aged under 8). You can call their helpline on 0845 6404040.

Monitoring complaints

Any member of staff who receives or investigates a complaint must complete a complaints record sheet and give it to the Director. The Director must store these confidentially. The Director will monitor these quarterly and write a summary report for the Executive Committee, and as required to London Borough of Haringey and other funders. This information will be used to make sure we are following up any issues of bad practice and to check out any patterns of concern.

Guidelines for staff, volunteers and people on placement dealing with a concern raised informally:

- Listen politely in a confidential setting where possible. Allow the person to 'let off steam'.
- Recognise their frustration. Put yourself in their shoes.
- Don't jump to conclusions. Get all the details – when, where, what, why and how of the situation. Take careful notes.
- Confirm that you have understood the complaint accurately by feeding back what you have noted down to the person making the complaint.
- Don't blame anyone. Be ready to apologise "I'm sorry, we made an oversight...."
- Don't accept liability or responsibility before an investigation has taken place.
- If the complainant has made a mistake, be diplomatic – "We may not have been clear."
- Don't argue or feel offended. This is a professional not personal issue.
- Find out what the person making a complaint wants from you.
- State clearly what you will do next. If you can't solve the problem there and then, state clearly what you will do next, and agree a time to get back to them, using the deadlines outlined in this policy.
- If you are unsure what to do, don't make promises you can't keep. Make sure the person knows that you are going to speak to your manager for advice.
- If you are offering a solution make sure the person is happy with this. This should be noted on the complaints reporting form.
- If the person is not happy with the solution, give them details of the formal complaints procedure and suggest that they use this.
- Inform the Director immediately either in person or by e-mail. If the Director is not available ensure that a member of the senior management team is informed.
- **Complete a complaint record form and give this to the Director within two working days of the complaint.**

Guidelines for writing an investigative report for a formal complaint:

The person carrying out the investigation should record the details on the formal complaints record sheet

On the formal complaints record sheet record:

- a brief outline of the complaint. If there are specific issues which cannot be considered under this procedure (eg. relating to a child protection), indicate this clearly, with explanation as to why.
- who was interviewed (this should include anyone who was named in the complaint)
- was the investigation done within the set timescale in the complaints policy? If not, explain the reason for the delay.

For the investigation report record:

A report summarising the complaint, explaining how the investigation was done (who was interviewed, what documentation was read), what conclusions you came to and why. The investigation report should include:

1. Main findings

If the complaint had more than one issue, structure the section to separate the issues. This section should examine the evidence gathered. The report should not give a verbatim account of every interview. It should identify salient points and statements. The report should comment on the weight of the evidence provided and should make a conclusion on that specific issue.

2. Recommendations

The report should conclude to what extent a complaint is upheld. The report should indicate the reasons why a complaint is upheld or not. The report should highlight action that they believe Markfield should consider as part of resolving the complaint. These should relate to policies, procedures etc. They may also relate to other procedures that should be followed in relation to the complaint, eg. if it is recommended that disciplinary action should be taken in relation to staff conduct.