



Policy – Complaints

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Purpose

Erskine aims to continuously to improve the quality of the services we provide to our service users, and to safeguard high standards of care, by using the views and experiences of the people who access them.

Whenever possible, the comments, suggestions and concerns of our service users and their families or representatives are dealt with as they arise. We recognise that there will be occasions where an individual will be dissatisfied with an explanation or apology given and may wish to make a complaint.

This Policy describes our commitment to respond to comments, suggestions and complaints. Where a complaint is made we aim to resolve the complaint as directly and quickly as possible being fair to the person making the complaint and those involved in delivering our services (whether this be clinical or support staff). It is our intention to make our complaints system as accessible and simple as possible.

Scope

This policy will be applicable to all employees and any individual engaged to work or volunteer on Erskine's premises.

Complaints Policy

All complaints are taken seriously and handled thoroughly. Each complaint will be dealt with on an individual basis.

It should also be remembered that many of our service users may not, for one reason or another, have the capacity to adequately explain the grounds of their complaint. It is, therefore, most important that we deal with such people in particular, in a caring and patient way.

Who can complain?

Complaints can be made by anyone including a person in receipt of care or service, or by a person acting on their behalf or by any person dissatisfied with the service provided by Erskine.

The Principles underlying our Complaints Policy

Erskine will:

- Listen to, aim to understand and act upon the views and experiences of the people who use our services
- Have effective person centred arrangements in place to encourage feedback
- Deal with all complaints efficiently and within the defined timescale
- Resolve complaints as close to the point of complaint as possible
- Deal with all complaints received on a fair and equitable basis
- Treat and respond to anyone wishing to complain politely, and with respect, patience and empathy
- Handle complaints in a way which is open and fair to service users and Erskine employees

- Support the person making the complaint and the staff named in the complaint and treat all those involved in the complaints process fairly
- Use complaints, and other feedback, as a means of identifying where service improvements can be made
- Ensure that where we contract with others to provide services our contracts will require the service provider to comply with Erskine's complaints procedure
- Recognise equality and diversity and promote a complaints system that responds sensitively to the individual needs, background and circumstances of people's lives
- Respect, as far as possible, any request for the identity of a complainant to remain confidential

How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made in writing, via e-mail, by telephone or in person to the person in charge of the Home/House/Department. (See appendix A for further details).

Anonymous complaints

The welfare and interest of Erskine's residents is paramount, therefore all employees have a duty to bring to the attention of Managers issues they consider either directly or indirectly to be damaging to resident care.

Erskine will consider all disclosures, including anonymous ones. In compliance with the organisation's Whistleblowing Policy, we seek to give assurance to employees to disclose their identity to those who need to know it.

When accepting anonymous complaints it will often be the case that this will limit a full investigation of the complaint and affect the ability of Erskine to reach a final decision. Where possible, the complainant will be advised of this limitation at the time the complaint is made (e.g. where the complaint is received by telephone), however, Erskine will consider such complaints as they may provide an early warning of unacceptable or dangerous care practice, which might otherwise persist.

Confidential Complaints

Normally, Erskine will respect the wishes of complainants who identify themselves but ask for their identity to remain confidential throughout the investigation i.e. a confidential complaint, however, this may not always be possible. For example, where it appears that a criminal offence may have been committed, Erskine must pass any relevant information to the police to investigate.

The complainant will be notified if Erskine intends to pass information to the police. We recognise that the general right to have the identity of an individual protected can be abused and therefore, in all cases, protection of the identity will be subject to Erskine being satisfied, on reasonable grounds, that there is a good reason for doing so.

Timescales

A complaint should be made:-

- (a) within 6 months of the event which is the cause of complaint, or

- (b) within 6 months of the person becoming aware of a cause of complaint as long as this is within 12 months from the cause of complaint

We will operate these time limits flexibly where it is unreasonable to expect that the complaint could have been made earlier provided it is still practicable to investigate the facts. We will be unable to consider a complaint many years after an event as our ability to properly investigate the facts will be hindered by the movement of staff and the ability to recall facts accurately with the passage of time.

We will acknowledge complaints within three working days of receipt and normally provide a response within 10 working days. If we are unable to meet this timescale for a response, a written explanation for the delay will be provided and we will indicate when we expect to be able to reply.

Service Improvement

Erskine will ensure that information gained from our service users' feedback and complaints is used to improve quality, through our clinical governance arrangements.

As well as responding to individual complaints we take the lessons from them and apply these as a basis for improving the quality of service provided. As well as receiving complaints we encourage feedback from our service users and welcome suggestions on how we can improve the quality of our services.

Monitoring of complaints

Erskine considers all the information gathered through the investigation provides valuable information on the quality of service provided and how we can continue to improve our service. We will continue to monitor outcomes and make quarterly reports to the clinical governance committee on all complaints activity.

Appendix A

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

FOR THOSE WISHING TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Complaints can be made in writing, via e-mail, by telephone or in person. All complaints will be dealt with efficiently within the defined timescale. If upheld, appropriate action will be taken.

It is our sincere wish that problems can be satisfactorily resolved at an early stage. It would, therefore, be both preferable and helpful if matters were raised with the person in charge of the Home/House/Department in the first instance. The steps you should take are as follows:-

1. Speak to the person in charge of the Home/House/Department at the time. Clearly identify the matters which are causing you concern. The person to whom you are speaking will consider the situation and take remedial action where appropriate.
2. A record of your complaint will be made in the Complaints' Register. You will be given the opportunity to make a written record of your complaint.
3. If by this stage you remain unhappy and do not feel that your complaint is being adequately dealt with then you can ask to meet with the Home/House Manager or the Head of the appropriate Department. That person will make all attempts to deal with the complaint. Once again a written record will be made in the Complaints' Register and you will again have the opportunity to make your own written comments.
4. Should you, by this stage, feel that you still have sufficient cause to be aggrieved you will be asked to put your complaint in writing with as much detail as possible. Your letter should then be sent to the Director of Care who is Erskine Home's Nominated Officer for the receipt of written complaints. The Nominated Officer for complaints will, upon receipt of your complaint, make arrangements to fully investigate your complaint and a full written reply will be sent to you. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter of complaint by return of post. It is our aim to provide a full written reply within a further 10 working days. If, for any reason, it proves to be impossible to adhere to this timetable (e.g. key members of staff on holiday/off sick) you will receive written progress reports at intervals of not more than 10 working days.

You also have the right to approach the regulating authority for the Erskine Home:

SCSWIS (Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland)
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee, DD1 4NY
enquiries@scswis.com
Tel: 01382 207100 or local call: 0845 600 9527

The above procedure has been set out to let you know the various stages through which complaints may pass. However, it is our desire that any complaint that may be raised can be dealt with and resolved at an early stage.

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT

COMPLAINANT (Name and Address) :	
Date / Time :	
Details of Complaint	
Complaint considered by :	Designation :
Was the complaint resolved at this stage :	YES / NO

Did Complainant receive a copy of the Complaints Procedure Leaflet :	YES / NO
Complainant directed to :	House Manager / Head of Department
Was complaint resolved at this stage? :	YES / NO

Complainant directed to Nominated Officer for Complaints by :	
Did Complainant provide written details for the Nominated Officer :	YES / NO
Complainant seen by Nominated Officer :	DATE :-
Was complaint resolved at this stage :	YES / NO
Written reply sent by Nominated Officer :	DATE :-

Outcome of complaint including details of any remedial action:		
The above outcome has been discussed with me :-		
Name.....	Signed.....	Date

PROCEDURE FOR FULL INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS

In the event of a written formal complaint being raised, a full investigation of the circumstances will take place and an Investigating Officer will be appointed.

The Investigating Officer will:

- Acknowledge the complaint by letter informing the complainant of how and who will be investigating the complaint
- Inform staff involved in the complaint of the allegations and the procedure
- Request statements from the staff involved, this may be followed by meetings with those involved to clarify any issues arising from the statements
- Keep a record of the investigation
- Summarise the findings and make recommendations

The Manager will inform the complainant of the outcome by letter and include:

- A summary of the complaint
- An apology, if appropriate (this does not have to be an admission of error but can be for the fact that they felt the need to complain and any anxiety experienced by them)
- Action to be taken to prevent a reoccurrence

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