



Complaints Policy

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1. Statement of Policy

People Know How is committed to providing fair and responsible treatment to its staff members, volunteers and service users. We endeavour to ensure that everyone involved with our services and activities is treated with dignity and respect. In order to ensure that we are able to maintain high quality, transparent and accessible services and activities, we encourage our service users to tell us when we get things wrong. We also want to help resolve complaints as quickly as possible.

We endeavour to listen to complaints, take them seriously, and learn from them, so that we can continuously improve our services and activities.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to complaints from members of the public and individuals accessing our services and activities. Staff members with concerns, problems or complaints should refer to our Disciplinary and Grievance Policy for procedure on how to address these. Volunteers should refer to the problem-solving procedure outlined in our Volunteering Policy.

3. Principles

People Know How:

- ↓ Is able to receive complaints by letter or email, or alternatively and if required, by virtue of reasonable adjustments. We treat all complaints seriously.
- ↓ Will handle all complaints with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times. We expect that any individuals making a complaint will also treat our staff members and volunteers with the same courtesy, respect and fairness.
- ↓ Will handle all complaints confidentially.
- ↓ Will deal with all service complaints promptly. We will acknowledge receipt of written complaints within 5 working days where we have a return address or email. We will endeavour to respond to complaints within 20 working days. In a few cases, we will not be able to send a full reply within this time, for example if a complaint is complex and requires investigation. If this happens, we will provide reasons and set a new timeframe based on the requirements of the individual complaint.
- ↓ Will strive to handle complaints in accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy, Confidentiality Policy, and Data Protection Policy.

4. Definitions

This Policy makes use of the following definitions.

Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

Service Complaints

Service complaints cover complaints about:

- The standards or quality of service that should be expected from People Know How.
- The behaviour of People Know How staff members and volunteers in delivering services and activities.
- Any action, or lack of action, by our staff members and volunteers.

Non-service Complaints

Non-service complaints cover:

- Comments about People Know How's policies or policy decisions.
- Dissatisfaction expressed with our policies or decisions about individual cases.
- Matters that have already been fully investigated through our complaints procedure.
- Anonymous complaints.

Third Party Reporting

Complainants may wish to have a third party act on their behalf. A third party is any person or organisation acting on behalf of, or making enquiries for, the complainant. Third parties may include, but are not restricted to:

- Advice organisations
- Professionals such as social workers, doctors or solicitors
- Family members or friends

5. Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with People Know How's Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection Policy.

6. Procedure for Service Complaints

The following complaints handling procedure is intended to provide complainants with an opportunity to make clear and detailed complaints about our services and activities. If at any point when carrying out the following procedure we do not feel we have enough information to deal with the complaint, we will contact the complainant for further information.

Making a Service Complaint

Individuals wishing to make a service complaint can do so by:

- Email
- Letter

Alternatively, if complainants have additional needs or are disabled and need reasonable adjustments to ensure they can register their complaint, they can contact People Know How by:

- Text

- Telephone (one of our staff members or volunteers will record the details of the complaint)
- Asking a staff member or volunteer to help record a complaint

People Know How will endeavour to ensure that our contact details are widely available on our communications, social media and website. If a complainant requires different adjustments, they are advised to let us know and we will try to put those arrangements in place wherever we can.

Receipt of Service Complaint

When we receive a complaint, it is recorded and logged on a Complaints Track Sheet. We will acknowledge that we have received the complaint within 5 working days – see Acknowledgement Letter Template (see Appendix A).

The complaint will then be passed to the appropriate staff member, volunteer or Trustee in charge of the service or activities in question.

Responding to Service Complaints

The relevant staff member, volunteer or Trustee will send a written full response to the complaint within 20 working days of its receipt – see Final Response Letter Template (see Appendix B).

Within this response, complainants will be informed of what action to take if they are not satisfied with the response. If the complainant is satisfied with the response, or if the complainant takes no action, People Know How will record the complaint as closed on a Complaints Track Sheet along with details of any action to be taken in response to the complaint.

People Know How expects that the majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage.

Requesting a Review

If a complainant is not satisfied with the full response received, they may request a review in writing. People Know How will acknowledge requests within 5 working days using the Acknowledgement Letter Template (see Appendix A). The complaint will then be sent to a member of the Board of Trustees (other than the Trustee who initially responded to the complaint), together with all relevant correspondence and evidence sent or received by People Know How related to the complaint.

The member of the Board of Trustees reviewing the complaint will provide a full response within 20 working days using the Final Response Letter Template (see Appendix B). If the complainant is satisfied with the response, or if the complainant takes no action, People Know How will record the complaint as closed on a Complaints Track Sheet along with details of any action to be taken in response to the complaint.

Unreasonable Complaints

People Know How will deal with all complaints in accordance with this Policy. However, unreasonable or abusive complaint behaviour does happen from time to time, and vexatious and repetitive complaints can be a problem. Difficulties in handling such situations can place strain on time and resources and can be stressful for staff members and volunteers.

Unreasonable, repetitive or abusive complaints will be dealt with at the discretion of the relevant staff member, volunteer or Trustee charged with handling the initial complaint.

7. Timescales

Our timescales are intended to make our complaints handling procedure as effective and accessible as possible. We aim to acknowledge all written service complaints or requests for review received within 5 working days of receipt. We aim to send a full response to all complaints and requests for review within 20 working days.

If a complaint or request for review is made in person to a staff member or volunteer, they will record this in writing within 3 working days, and acknowledge it within a further 5 working days. The complainant will receive a copy of the written record with this acknowledgement. The complaint or request for review will then be dealt with in accordance with the policy for written service complaints outlined above.

Extending Time Limits

People Know How aims to complete investigations into all complaints received within the timescales above. However, in a limited number of cases – for example is a complaint is complex or requires further investigation – it may be necessary extend the time limit to ensure that we have all the information necessary to deal with it. If this is the case, the complainant will be informed and given information on any progress.

8. Remedies

When we get thing wrong, People Know How will act to:

- Accept responsibility and apologise
- Explain what went wrong and why
- Put things right by making any changes required
- Learn lessons from mistakes and make changes to policy and procedure where sensible to do so

The action we take to put matters right in response to a service complaint can include any combination of the remedies set out in the list below:

- A full apology, explaining what happened and/or what went wrong (an apology is not an acceptance of liability under Section 2 of the Compensation Act 2006).
- Remedial action, which may include reviewing or changing a decision on the service or activity given to an individual complainant.
- Providing the service required in the first instance (immediately if appropriate)
- Putting things right (for example a change of procedure to prevent future difficulties of a similar kind, either for the complainant or other service users)
- Training or supervising staff
- Financial compensation.

The general principle that People Know How follow is that complainants should, so far as possible, be put in the position they would have been in had things not gone wrong.

The remedy applied needs to be proportionate and appropriate to the failure in service, and will be at the discretion of the relevant staff member, volunteer or Trustee charged with dealing with the complaint.

Financial Compensation

In the majority of cases, remedies other than financial compensation will be appropriate and will satisfy the complainant. Financial compensation will only apply in cases where the loss or suffering caused is considered to warrant such a payment, i.e. in cases of actual direct or indirect financial loss.

In circumstances where it is decided that People Know How's action or lack of action has resulted in maladministration, if the complainant has suffered direct or indirect financial loss, compensation may be payable. In addition, where it is decided, following investigation of a complaint, that a complainant has suffered an injustice and/or hardship resulting in direct or indirect financial loss due to maladministration, People Know How will determine whether compensation is an appropriate remedy by looking at all the evidence, including how much the complainant can demonstrate they have lost, or what extra costs they have incurred as a result of People Know How's maladministration.

The reasons behind any decisions about compensation will be recorded and included in responses provided to the complainant.

9. Procedure for Non-service Complaints & Comments

At People Know How, quality of service is an important measure of our effectiveness. Learning from complaints, including non-service complaints (complaints not related to the provision of our services and activities) is a powerful way of ensuring continuous improvement and enabling People Know How to better deliver to our values and standards.

All non-service complaints received will be looked at by our Board of Trustees, and a response, if required, sent within 20 working days where possible.

As well as learning from complaints, People Know How is also interested in ideas for how we might do things better. We also want to hear when we do things well. All comments received will be passed on to the Board of Trustees and will be used to help improve our services and projects.

10. Recording Complaints

People Know How will record complaint details, outcomes, actions taken, any requests for appeal, and other information. All complaints received will be recorded on a Complaints Track Sheet. We will also keep records of all evidence collected to investigate complaints and all communications sent and received by People Know How. Our records will be used to understand what types of problems are most prevalent and how well we are doing to resolve them.

All records will be handled and stored in accordance with our Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection Policy.

11. Monitoring & Review

The effectiveness of this Complaints Policy will be reviewed annually and action taken as necessary.

This Policy will be reviewed in 2017.

Appendix A: Acknowledgement Letter Template

The following should be used as a template to acknowledge all complaints received.

People Know How
Ocean Terminal
Ocean Dr
Edinburgh EH6 6JJ

[INSERT DATE]

Dear [INSERT COMPLAINANTS NAME],

RE: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF YOUR RECENT COMPLAINT

Thank you for your recent complaint / request for appeal in your your letter / your email / the conversation of [INSERT DATE].

I am sorry that you are not happy with the service provided by People Know How. As we understand it, you would like to issue a complaint / request an appeal regarding [INSERT DETAILS]. Please contact me if you feel we have misunderstood your concerns.

We have passed your complaint / request for appeal on to our [INSERT ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL CONCERN HAS BEEN PASSED TO], who will investigate your concerns and respond in full within 20 working days.

Please feel free to contact me with any further information relevant to your complaint / request for appeal.

Yours sincerely

[INSERT NAME]
[INSERT JOB TITLE]

People Know How
Web: www.peopleknowhow.org

People Know How is a not-for-profit organisation based in Scotland. We work to enhance the people's lives by providing the support and help they need to grow to reach their full potential. To find out more about our mission, work and services, please visit www.peopleknowhow.org.

Registered Scottish Charity Number: SC043871

Appendix B: Final Response Letter Template

The following should be used as a template to inform complainants of the final response to their complaint.

People Know How
Ocean Terminal
Ocean Dr
Edinburgh EH6 6JJ

[INSERT DATE]

Dear [INSERT COMPLAINANTS NAME],

RE: OUR RESPONSE TO YOUR RECENT COMPLAINT

Further to our letter of [INSERT DATE], I have now investigated your complaint / request for appeal. I am writing to [INSERT DETAILS OF FINAL RESPONSE].

Please note that, under the terms of our Complaints Policy, this letter outlines our final response to your complaint / request for appeal. If you are dissatisfied with it, you may wish to contact us to appeal this response and refer it to a member of our Board of Trustees.

Yours sincerely

[INSERT NAME]
[INSERT JOB TITLE]

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