

# Sutton Mental Health Foundation



## **EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

(for staff seeking to make a complaint the Grievance Procedure in the Staff Handbook should be used)

Sutton Mental Health Foundation (SMHF) is committed to a policy of providing quality services. SMHF believes that there is always scope for improvement and therefore calls upon people who use SMHF services to work with Trustees, staff and volunteers to improve services. Suggestions, ideas and comments are welcome at all times.

Through its complaints policy SMHF encourages anyone who has a complaint to make their complaint known. It is only by making complaints known that the organisation will be able to address them to ensure that they are satisfactorily resolved and appropriate steps taken to avoid recurrence.

### **Principles**

1. People making complaints have the right to be heard
2. Complaints are to be investigated without prejudice
3. People making complaints are to be treated fairly, seriously and without discrimination
4. People making complaints have the right to confidentiality, but anonymous complaints may not be investigated
5. Use of abusive, offensive or defamatory words by the person making a complaint or complaints may entail suspension of the complaint
6. The level and nature of complaints will be recorded and monitored
7. This complaints policy will be made available to people who use SMHF services

### **Complaints procedures**

1. The first stage in making a complaint is to speak to the manager who will try to resolve the complaint within 7 working days.
2. If the first stage is unsuccessful the complaint will move to the second stage.
3. In the second stage, the complainant will be asked to put the details of the complaint in writing to the Manager. The complaint should be by letter or email, please give SMHF: Your name and address; your daytime phone number and preferred contact times; a summary of the complaint; date of the incident; the person or people involved; how you think SMHF should resolve the situation.

4. This written complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days and will be responded to within 20 working days. If you are not happy with the response, the matter will be referred to the Chair of Trustees who will be provided with details of the complaint.
5. The Chair on receiving the complaint will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days and will investigate or arrange for the complaint to be investigated.
6. The complainant will receive a written reply from the Chair within 14 working days of receipt of the complaint. Where it is not possible for an investigation to be completed within 14 working days, the complainant will receive an explanatory letter.
7. Where the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation results, they should write to the Chair of the Board of Trustees within 14 working days of the result, giving their reasons for dissatisfaction.
8. The Chair may request a meeting to discuss the outcome
9. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will inform the Board about the complaint at the next Board meeting. The Board will try to deal with the complaint and the complainant will receive a reply from the Board of Trustees within 14 working days of the meeting. The reply from the Board will be final.
10. Where the complaint is about the manager or any trustee other than the Chair, the complaint should be made directly to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
11. Where the complaint is about both the Chair, then it should be reported to any member of the Board and the Manager should also be informed. An independent investigator may need to be appointed
12. All people who use SMHF services have the right to complain to the local authority, London Borough of Sutton, in accordance with its published procedures.

## **Records**

- Records of all complaints will be kept at the SMHF office
- The Manager will pass details of complaints and the outcome to the Chair of the Board of Trustees
- The numbers and types of complaints will be monitored anonymously
- Complaints along with compliments will be used as a monitoring tool for the improvement of service delivery.