

# Adult Social Care Customer Feedback Procedure

Version 2.1 (September 2014) – address amendment

Blackpool Council



# Adult Social Care – Customer Feedback Procedure

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## **Statement of Intent**

The Adult Services Department is committed to ensuring fair access to effective, quality services. Where our service does not meet expectation, our Service Users or their representatives are encouraged (and in many cases entitled by law) to bring this to our attention so that we can take appropriate action.

This Customer Feedback Procedure sets out the way in which we fulfil our responsibilities and all staff are required to ensure that it is followed.

Delyth Curtis

Director of Adult Services

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## 1. Introduction

The Adult Services want to hear what people think about our services. We welcome feedback about the care we offer, what we do well and how we can be more effective in sorting out problems. By listening to people's experiences our aim is to improve the service we provide to the people who use them and the staff working in them.

This document outlines how Adult Services **listens** to the feedback we receive, how we **respond** and what we do to **improve** our services.

## 2. LISTENING

Our customers can provide feedback about the service they have received in various ways:

- Letter – The Customer Relations Team, Adult Services, Blackpool Council, PO Box 4, Blackpool, FY1 1NA
- Telephone – 01253 477700
- Visit – Any Adult Social Care reception
- Feedback forms – Available from Adult Social Care receptions
- Email – [customerrelations@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:customerrelations@blackpool.gov.uk)
- Via Blackpool Council Website – [www.blackpool.gov.uk/socialcarecomplaints](http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/socialcarecomplaints)

We will ensure that our services are accessible equally to all sections of the community who may be in need of them and will not inadvertently discriminate against particular groups. Particular account will be taken of factors such as disability, age, gender, religion, race and sexual orientation.

If customers feel or appear to be at any disadvantage in being able to express themselves, Adult Services will offer them the help and support they need to have their concerns listened to and understood. This may include translation or interpretation services or referral to sources of local independent advocacy and advice (see **What is an Advocate?** below).

### 2.1. Compliments

Adult Services want to hear from people when we get things right. This helps us to understand what services people value. When we know what is working for our customers, we can develop as well as share good practice. This ensures we can achieve our aim to continue to learn and improve. Compliments also help us recognise and reward our staff when they “go the extra mile”.

Compliments can be sent to the Customer Relations Team by any of the methods outlined above. When they receive a compliment, the Customer Relations Team uses the information to feedback to senior managers so they are aware of what their staffs are achieving. Where appropriate, the Customer Relations Team write to the service user to thank them for their valuable feedback.

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## 2.2. Comments

We believe that listening to our customers' comments helps us to improve the way we do things. We welcome any suggestions about how we might do things differently or better and are committed to taking seriously any suggestions for service improvements.

Like compliments, comments should be sent to the Customer Relations Team who will ensure the information is dealt with as appropriate.

## 2.3. Complaints

There will be occasions when customers feel they wish to challenge a decision or complain when they feel they have received a poor service.

It is appreciated that customers may find it difficult to talk about their views or concerns. However, Adult Services want all customers to be reassured that their views will be taken seriously and that there will be no repercussions when they raise concerns.

Sometimes the issues raised will be treated as complaints and handled within this procedure. On other occasions, it may be more appropriate to use a different way to resolve things. For example when someone is at a risk of harm, then the Adult Safeguarding Procedure will be used. The decision regarding how a complaint will be processed will be made by the Customer Relations Manager.

If a complaint is made verbally and dealt with no later than the next working day, these procedures need not apply.

## 2.4. Who can complain?

Complaints may be made by a person who receives or has received services from Adult Services or any person affected or likely to be affected by the Council's actions, omissions or decisions.

The complaint may be about the following:

- Any service or lack of service provision
- A failure to consider all relevant information when coming to a decision
- Staff attitude
- Delay or failure to respond to a request for service or an inquiry
- Failure to provide a suitable standard or level of service

There may be other issues you wish to complain about. The Customer Relations Team Manager will be happy to discuss whether these can be considered under these procedures.

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A representative of a person may also make a complaint. The representative must be acting on behalf of a person who had a right to complain where this person:

- Is unable to complain themselves because of: a physical incapacity or a lack of capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005; or
- Has requested the representative to act on their behalf (proof must be provided in this instance); or
- Has died

The Council may refuse to deal with complaints made without permission from the person who is the subject of a complaint or if it is felt that the representative is not acting in the service user's best interest.

## **2.5. When does this complaints procedure not apply?**

There are occasions when it is not appropriate to use this procedure. Below are some examples:

- When the initial contact is a request for a service
- When the issue is about something other than a social care provision – the Corporate Complaints procedure may be more appropriate
- When the complaint is over 12 months old – unless there are exceptional circumstances
- When the complaint is made by another organisation
- When the complaint is made by an employee of Blackpool Council relating to employment issues
- When a complaint has already been considered under these procedures
- When matters are raised that are already being considered by the Courts
- If a criminal Police Investigation is invoked
- If a complaint has already been investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman
- If a complaint has arisen out of the alleged failure to comply with a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- If a complaint has arisen out of the alleged failure to comply with a request for information under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Occasionally, complaints may be made when other procedures are underway, for example criminal investigations or court proceedings. The Customer Relations Manager has the discretion not to commence, or to suspend, complaints investigations if to proceed would compromise another procedure. The complaint investigation may, if appropriate, start or resume once the concurrent investigation is discontinued or completed.

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## 2.6. Complaints about domiciliary and residential care

Domiciliary care providers and residential homes all have their own complaints procedure. However, the Customer Relations Team can help service users raise concerns with these private organisations, even if Blackpool Adult Services has not commissioned the care on their behalf.

The Customer Relations Team will ensure that complaints about private agencies are fully investigated and responded to. Additionally, the Customer Relations Team passes on any complaints about private care providers to the Care Quality Commission who regularly review the service offered by these agencies.

## 2.7. What is an advocate?

Advocates are independent and impartial and use their own experience as ordinary citizens to speak or act on behalf of the person they are advocating for. They support service users to help them look at the issues and the options they have as well as access information on their behalf. Each advocate's role is to ensure that the person at the heart of the issue, is fully involved, included and has their rights fully respected.

If someone wants an advocate to help them with a complaint against Blackpool Adult Services, they can contact:

Blackpool Advocacy  
Myriad House  
6a Skyways  
Amy Johnson Way  
Blackpool  
FY4 2RP

Tel: 01253 405959

Fax: 01253 348232

Email: [admin@blackpooladvocacy.co.uk](mailto:admin@blackpooladvocacy.co.uk)

## 2.8. How anonymous complaints are handled

Anonymous complaints are handled in the same way as all other complaints; although it is not possible to provide a response to the complainant. The Customer Relations Team Manager will ensure any issues that arise from anonymous complaints are dealt with appropriately.

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## **2.9. Protecting the vulnerable**

Some complaints received by the Customer Relations Team may make reference to safeguarding concerns for an adult or adults at risk of harm. An adult at risk of harm in this context is usually understood to have needs for care and support (whether or not the Authority is meeting any of those needs) and as a result of those needs is or may be unable to protect himself or herself against abuse or neglect or the risk of it. Abuse and Neglect in this context is given to mean a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons (No Secrets DH 2000).

Whilst the details of the complaint will be considered, the safety of the service user is paramount and takes precedence over any other procedures.

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## 3. RESPONDING

Blackpool Council Adult Services are committed to handling complaints in a timely manner. It is recognised that a clear plan of how a complaint will be handled from the start often means the complaint will be resolved satisfactorily and appropriately.

### 3.1. What happens when a complaint is received?

If a complaint is received verbally, and can be resolved within 24 hours then the Customer Relations Team do not need to be informed. However, even if a complaint is resolved within 24 hours but is of a serious nature or staff feel that lessons can be learned then it is important this information is shared with the Customer Relations Team.

All other complaints, however communicated, should be passed to the Customer Relations Team. The Customer Relations Team Manager will consider the seriousness of the complaint, and ensure the complaint is acknowledged no later than 3 working days from when the complaint is received. The complaint can be acknowledged either verbally or in writing.

A member of the Customer Relations Team will provide an acknowledgement of receipt . In some instances, a senior manager of the service involved will be asked to contact the customer to acknowledge the complaint, especially if this means the complaint can be resolved quickly.

### 3.2. Meeting with the complainant

Following the acknowledgement, the complaint will be passed to the manager of the service the complaint is about. It will be the manager's responsibility to contact the complainant to discuss the details of the complaint and offer a meeting if necessary or appropriate. The manager will make the person aware that they can request an advocate to support them throughout the complaints process, including at this first meeting.

The meeting is an opportunity for the complainant to explain what they feel went wrong and what outcome they would like as a result of their complaint. The manager will discuss how long it will take to deal with the complaint and how they will proceed in dealing with the issues raised.

If the complainant does not wish to meet with the manager, then the manager will contact them by phone to discuss the details of their complaint.

Once the manager has met with the complainant, they will endeavour to resolve these issues as soon as possible. If the matter can be quickly resolved without further investigation and the complainant is happy with this, then no further action is required. The Manager will make accurate and appropriate notes which will be held on file as a permanent record. They will also advise the Customer Relations Team of the outcome details.

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## 3.3. Responding to complaints

When someone makes a complaint about a service, they have the right to a response which explains how their concerns have been resolved and what action has been taken. Every response will be different but may include any of the following where appropriate:

- An apology
- An explanation of what happened
- An explanation of how it will be ensured the problem does not occur again
- Action taken to put things right

The service manager who visits the complainant is responsible for responding in writing to the complainant to let them know the outcome.

## 3.4. Unresolved complaints and complex issues

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response from the service manager then the Director of Adult Services may ask the Customer Relations Officer to meet with the complainant to discuss the reasons why and clarify which issues are still unresolved.

In most cases, the Customer Relations Officer will be responsible for investigating the complaint. This will include looking at procedures, reviewing case files and interviewing staff. A report will then be produced which will state whether the complaint(s) have been upheld or not and will outline any recommendations as a result of the investigation.

The complainant will receive a copy of this report.

## 3.5. What complainants can do if they are not satisfied with the response

Adult Services want to do whatever they can to resolve matters when someone complains. However, there will be times when a complainant is still not satisfied. If this is the case, then they can contact the Local Government Ombudsman to review the matter.

The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted the following ways:

- Visiting: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)
- Calling: The LGO Intake Team on 0300 061 0614, the helpline is open from 8.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.
- Texting 'call back' to: 0762 480 4323
- Faxing: 024 7682 0001
- Online form: [www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint](http://www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint)
- Writing to: The Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH.

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### **3.6. Unreasonable and persistent complaints**

In some cases, Adult Services may have to refuse to deal with complainants who become aggressive or unreasonably persistent. In such circumstances, the Customer Relations Manager will write to the complainant explaining why they are being considered as an unreasonable and persistent complainant. The letter will explain what the complainant can do if they have any further issues. This may include limiting the contact to only one means such as phone, placing a time limit on any contact or refusing to register repeated complaints about the same issue.

### **3.7. Timescales for handling complaints**

All complaints will be acknowledged either verbally or by correspondence within 3 working days of receiving the complaint.

The majority of complaints will be responded to within 15 working days, although this can be extended in special circumstances, for example due to staff leave or statutory holidays.

Complex cases that require an investigation will be completed within 6 months of receiving the initial complaint, unless there are special circumstances, in which case this may be extended following a discussion with the complainant.

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## 4. IMPROVING

Listening to feedback about our services can uncover new ideas to help improve the way we do things. Adult Services are committed to understanding our customers and using our knowledge of customers to improve and develop our services. It is our aim to raise levels of customer satisfaction by:

- Handling problems effectively
- Providing a prompt service
- Having professional, competent staff who treat people fairly
- Being friendly, polite and sympathetic to individual needs

We want our customers to:

- Tell us what's working
- Help us identify potential service problems
- Help us identify risks and prevent them from getting worse
- Highlight opportunities for staff improvement
- Provide information needed to review our services and procedures effectively

### 4.1. What happens with the feedback received?

The Customer Relations Manager produces monthly reports which track complaints and highlight areas for improvement. These reports are escalated to senior management and the Director of Adult Services, who use this information to drive change and help improve services where appropriate.

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### Approved By:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
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