



**Rising Sun**  
Domestic Violence  
& Abuse Service

## **Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedures**

There is a complex interplay between how we inform our clients, what we consult with them about and how they then feel in terms of satisfaction. We have learned that staff need to be aware of the subtleties involved in the feedback process, how empowering it can be for our clients to be heard and to get feedback about their needs. Information, consultation and feedback are all integral to one another and play a significant part in how we shape and review our services.

Our clients are the experts on what it means to be in receipt of services and it is in our best interests to hear what they say and decide whether we can use their views as a learning experience. As with anyone in society ensuring that people are well informed means they can give even more valuable insights into what we do. Where we ensure that our clients understand the work we do, the restrictions we have and the limits, capabilities, criteria and structure of our organisation the better they can understand.

We operate within a continual learning environment and as professional support staff we recognise that we always have opportunities to learn and grow as individuals and teams. We appreciate that the views of our clients can help us to practice more efficiently and effectively and are open to constructive criticism. Our clients also have extremely useful views on the sector in which we work and we aim to ensure that their views are represented as fully as possible within external forums.

### **1. Differentiating complaints and feedback**

Very often clients just wish to say when something isn't working in order to be heard and to hear how we can either debunk or solve the problem. These matters may be raised in a general chat or in a 1-1. Any member of staff who is listening to a client who is raising an issue about the service provided in any way has a responsibility to acknowledge to the client that they will take this forward. It may be that you can solve the problem on the spot. In which case do, this makes the clients feel well supported and listened to. If you do solve it on the spot, then make a case note as a feedback and record whether you have asked the client if they are happy with the outcome, or whether they wish to take it further. After recording inform the Head of Children and Young People (CYP) or Adult Services and CEO that you have made this record so that they are aware and can use the discussion to inform service development.

If they are not happy then please complete a complaint form, and follow the timescale procedure below.

## 1.1 Timescales

If a client complains about the service they should expect to receive an acknowledgement within three days, and at Stage One a response from their keyworker within 5 working days. If the complaint is escalated to Stage Two (Head of CYP or Adult Services) they should expect a full reply normally within four weeks. If the complaint raises complex issues that cannot be answered within four weeks and is escalated to The Steering Board, they will be kept informed of progress at four-weekly intervals until we are able to respond fully to the complaint.

- 1.1.1 If a client wishes to complain or contribute feedback formally about the service she is receiving, or any other aspect of her experience whilst being supported by Rising Sun Domestic Violence & Abuse Service (Rising Sun), she can do this by speaking to a Rising Sun employee.
- 1.1.2 Should the client not feel comfortable discussing her complaint with an employee, for whatever reason, she can complain to the Head of CYP or Adult Services, or the CEO.
- 1.1.3 Once the client wishing to complain has approached the employee, they must first establish if the complaint or feedback is a minor matter which can be rectified simply and without conflict. In such cases, there may be no need to seek a written version of the complaint/feedback, and the process outlined under **Differentiating complaints and feedback** (previous page) can be followed.
- 1.1.4 In cases where the employee has been approached about a more serious issue, that is a complaint and not a request for a service, they must establish whether the client would like assistance in putting her complaint in writing. No pressure should be exerted on her to do this on her own, she can be offered the opportunity to sit down together and record the complaint - the client giving details and the employee recording the details and reading them back for confirmation before seeking the client's signature to confirm that what has been recorded is accurate.
- 1.1.5 If the employee, within the boundaries of her delegated authority, can resolve the complaint, she should attempt to do so. However, if the complaint cannot be resolved like this or the complaint is about staff at project level, the Head of CYP or Adult Services must lead on resolving the complaint.
- 1.1.6 If the complaint is about the Head of CYP or Adult Services, the CEO must lead, if the complaint is about the CEO the Chairperson of the Board must lead on resolving the complaint.
- 1.1.7 The member of staff who is trying to resolve the complaint should follow these guidelines
  - 🗣️ Get clear information from the client making the complaint about what went wrong and when? Also ask her for her views on how she would like the complaint resolved – ie what will fix the problem
  - 🗣️ If the complaint is the result of a poor service or mistake by the Rising Sun this should be rectified immediately and an apology made to the client
  - 🗣️ If the complaint or feedback allows for useful learning, then that learning should be explained to the client and implemented in practice and or policy as appropriate
  - 🗣️ If her complaint is considered unjustified, it should be explained to the client why this is.

1.1.8 In all cases, the member of staff must reply to the client, letting her know the outcome of her complaint. She should be told this in writing but should be given support in discussing and understanding the situation with a member of staff to ensure that she feels an acceptable resolution has been found.

## 1.2 If a complaint remains unresolved

If it has not been possible to achieve a resolution to the client's complaint that is satisfactory to both parties, the client should be advised that she can proceed to the next stage of the process if she wishes to pursue the matter. If the initial complaint was made to an employee but remains unresolved, the CEO must review it. If the CEO has already been involved previously, the Board must review the complaint. The information they will need to consider the client's complaint is:

- 👉 What the problem is
- 👉 What actions have been taken to resolve the problem
- 👉 Why the client remains dissatisfied
- 👉 What the client would consider a satisfactory resolution to her complaint

Clients must be advised that they have the right to appeal. If they remain dissatisfied, they can take the complaint to the funding body for that aspect of the service.

Once the Board of Trustees has considered the client's complaint, they must explain to her in writing their decision and what the next steps are if she remains unsatisfied. The client should be offered the same support as described above in discussing and responding to the decision about her complaint.

## 2. Dealing with complaints and feedback from stakeholders

The procedure for dealing with complaints and feedback from stakeholders will follow the steps set out above, except that in this case, complaints and feedback should be addressed to the CEO.

Each time a formal complaint or feedback is given then every area that is offered as an outcome should be followed through either in team meetings, training, staff 1-1s etc. Stakeholders should receive full and frank feedback regarding the outcome where it does not impact on client confidentiality. Associated paperwork should then be filed in the Client Feedback file. This may be a copy of meeting minutes where an issue has been addressed, a piece of informal feedback from a case note or a complaint form.

## 3. Institutional Advocacy

Rising Sun is committed to ensuring that clients are the recipients of best practice in services they receive and we acknowledge that we will be dynamic in ensuring that our service provision is monitored and reviewed on this basis. There are times when our clients may not receive the best service from other providers and this will be an issue that we must support our clients to address, preferably for empowerment reasons for themselves, possibly through a complaints or feedback process operating in that organization. However, we will enable them in an appropriate way and at times this may involve supporting their communications with the agency concerned. Any advocacy of this nature will take place with the support of a manager.

Rising Sun staff may notice a trend change overall in the operation of an organization and this may require strategic advocacy. Feeding back observed changes in other organisations is important through the team meetings or 1-1s in order that strategic assessments of ways forward can be managed, still with the purpose of best practice for our clients.

Rising Sun will maintain a Signposting Resources Manual and each agency will have an assessment attached to it. If there are concerns or issues that arise workers may need to record these on that assessment in order that all staff are mindful of referring clients to that organisation.

### **3.1 What happens to consultations and feedback?**

Each year Rising Sun will take all aspects of service provision including outcomes data, consultations and dieback and make them part of the overall service review to aid operational planning for the following year. Any issues that arise that could inform best practice on a multi-agency level will be taken to the appropriate forum.

## **4. Informing and consulting clients**

Most misunderstandings could be avoided through good communication. When people know where they stand and what is available to them, what the limits of that are and how they can move forward from issues they face then they tend to be more conducive to successful relationships, with each, their keyworker and the organisation as a whole.





Simply explaining to someone the policy and process within which we are held can help them to understand the reasons for our behavior. They may also need to understand the design of the services.

Sometimes we can inform people and hear their views but they may still not feel satisfied. As long as we endeavor to appreciate their point of view to a reasonable conclusion we must accept that we have done the best we can. By informing our clients we ensure that they have the knowledge to decide whether they can help us to be a better organisation, whether they wish to become more involved, offer constructive feedback through consultation meetings.

By maintaining a professional approach to informing clients we are best able to hear their views and ensure that their needs are met within the limits of our criteria.

### **4.1 Informing: Aims and Principles**

4.1.1. Rising Sun is committed to communicating clearly and effectively with clients and its services so that they can:

-  Make informed choices about the support provided by us
-  Access advice and support from other agencies
-  Clients and children are able to contribute their unique perspectives as to how the delivery of services could be improved
-  Understand what we do, how and why we do things in order to make working relationships more effective.

4.1.2 Rising Sun is also committed to ensuring that individual communication needs are met, that clients are asked how they prefer to be informed and by what methods.

## 4.2 Sources of information for potential clients

4.2.1 We will ensure that potential clients have access to information about the service by:

- 👑 Maintaining and distributing promotional leaflets and literature aimed at clients who may benefit from the service
- 👑 Distributing posters advertising the service and how to get in touch confidentially
- 👑 Providing referring agencies with information about the service so they can signpost and refer clients appropriately.

## 4.3 Consulting: Aims and Principles

Rising Sun values the participation and involvement of clients and children in its work and believes that this involvement can help ensure that:

- 👑 Clients are empowered to make decisions about things which affect them directly.
- 👑 Clients have the knowledge to understand the organisation, its systems and processes and this makes it easier for them to appreciate our roles and responsibilities when offering us feedback.
- 👑 Children's voices are heard and taken account of in making any decisions which affect them
- 👑 Clients and children are able to contribute their unique perspectives as clients to improving the delivery of services
- 👑 Clients are able to gain experience of operating at a senior and responsible level which may support their personal growth and confidence.

## 4.4 Guidelines for supporting clients to participate

- 👑 Try to make participation opportunities as informal as possible. If they feel like low key social events as well, more clients may be attracted to them. A chat over tea and biscuits can achieve as much or more than a formal meeting.
- 👑 If a client has problems with reading and writing, ensure that you explain any information to her so that she does not miss out on an opportunity to voice her views.
- 👑 If a client has any other support needs in relation to communication (eg hearing, sight or speech difficulties) assess these and ensure that the necessary support is in place for her to participate.
- 👑 Always offer opportunities to get involved and encourage their take-up. Let clients know they can come along and just listen if they want. It may take time for some client's confidence to build enough to state opinions.
- 👑 Offer 1-1 opportunities to state views and listen carefully so you can relay these without changing their emphasis or meaning. A lot of valuable information about the service will come your way via informal encounters – make sure you feed this information through as well.
- 👑 If clients choose not to participate try and find out why this is. A client may not feel ready to engage or she might like to try with some support. Try and find the best way to support her involvement (eg pair her with a friend/make it clear she can just attend and listen/ with prior agreement find out her views and be her advocate at a meeting).
- 👑 Access any outside support from other agencies that clients or children may need in order to voice their views.

#### **4.5 Client surveys/mechanisms for feedback and consultation**

The following tools will be used with clients:

- 👤 Outcomes: IDVAs and outreach staff will collect outcomes data with clients. These are input at case closure onto the On Track database.
- 👤 Satisfaction surveys. As cases are closed, and subject to the availability of the Student Social Workers clients will have a survey completed. At least once a year, surveys will be completed.
- 👤 Satisfaction Surveys/Follow up calls. Calls will be made to clients 6 months after their support.