

## Cognus Customer Feedback Policy

### General

- 1 Cognus is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone we deal with, and we expect staff to act in accordance with our company values. In order to do this we need to know when our staff and services do things well, and also when we get things wrong
- 2 You can provide feedback by email or post; the contact details are: [feedback@cognus.org.uk](mailto:feedback@cognus.org.uk) or Feedback, Cognus, 24 Denmark Road, Carshalton SM5 2JG
- 3 Feedback will be used with staff and services as a tool to recognise good practice, and to improve processes and services. We also welcome all other comments and suggestions that may improve aspects of our service.
- 4 In some cases, negative feedback may be dealt with as a complaint; we treat as a complaint any notified dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response. This can be:
  - the standard of service we provide
  - the behaviour of our staff
  - any action or lack of action by staff negatively affecting someone
  - failure to follow procedures or policies
  - failure to take into account relevant matters in a decision
- 5 Things that won't be responded to under the complaints process will be:
  - matters which have not taken place within the preceding 12 months
  - matters that have already been fully investigated and responded to
  - anonymous complaints - although the feedback will still be investigated and dealt with internally
  - matters where procedures and remedies are set out elsewhere in legislation, e.g. admissions appeals, SEN Tribunals, data breaches and data requested under the Freedom of Information Act or Data Protection Act
  - requests for advice or support which should be dealt with as general correspondence; we will monitor these as it may help influence changes to our published information
  - matters which are not managed by Cognus
- 6 Where the communication falls under paragraph 5, a response will be given under our normal correspondence deadlines; this is within 5 working days of being allocated to the appropriate person.

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### Complaints

- 7 Complaints will follow the following process
- Informal resolution
  - Stage 1 – Investigation and response
  - Stage 2 – Review by senior manager
  - Stage 3 – Internal appeal
  - In some circumstances, the right to refer to the Local Government Ombudsman will be offered, depending on the service involved and type of complaint
- 8 **Informal Resolution**  
In most cases, we will attempt to resolve issues informally through a conversation by telephone or by meeting. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request their complaint is referred through the formal stages of the process.
- 9 **Stage 1**  
This is the formal investigation into a complainant's dissatisfaction. The outcome will normally be sent by the manager of the team or service against whom the complaint has been made, unless the complaint refers to them or someone senior. Responses will determine if a complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld
- 10 **Stage 2**  
If you are dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response you may request a review, and your initial response will indicate how to do this. A review will consider if the original complaint response was correct, and if any remedies were appropriate. This will normally be conducted by the relevant Head of Service unless they provided the Stage 1 response, in which case it will go to an alternative Head of Service. Outcomes will determine if the stage 1 response was correct, correct with additional explanation or remedy, or not correct in which case a new outcome will be given. Where services are provided on behalf of the Local Authority, their views and input may be sought and taken into account.
- 11 **Stage 3**  
If you remain dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response and explanation, you may appeal to the Service Director (or Managing Director if the Service Director responded to Stage 2).
- 12 Stage 3 complaints will be shared with the London Borough of Sutton who may provide input to the response. Cognus may also determine complaints at other stages warrant the same input or sharing.

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- 13 Following Stage 3 complainants may have the right to refer their case to the Local Government Ombudsman, who can investigate matters relating to some services we provide on behalf of the London Borough of Sutton.
- 14 It will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including your details, your child's details (where relevant), any relevant documents and correspondence, stating the specific grounds upon which you are making a complaint. We may need to contact you to clarify aspects of your complaint if it isn't clear from your email or letter. Please also provide any reference number you have been quoted in prior correspondence.
- 15 You may not bypass stages of the complaints procedure; i.e. Stage 1 must be considered before escalation to higher stages.
- 16 The person investigating your complaint may wish to contact you to discuss it in further detail, and they may ask to speak or meet with you prior to issuing a response.
- 17 Our standards for handling complaints
  - complaints will be treated seriously and will be investigated
  - you will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times
  - we will be honest in our responses and not hide our faults
  - we will deal with your complaint promptly at each stage - we will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 2 working days; we endeavour to respond to complaints within 10 working days, however, complex cases may require further investigation and a full reply will be sent within 20 working days of receipt
  - if we cannot send a full reply within 20 working days of receipt we will tell you the reason why and let you know when you may expect a full response
- 18 Following any stage of the procedure, a complainant has a maximum of 1 calendar month from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.
- 19 We reserve the right to reject repeated complaints or those that are deliberately made to hinder or obstruct our services.
- 20 When we get things wrong we will act to:
  - accept responsibility
  - explain what went wrong and why
  - put things right by making any changes required
  - improve our processes and services

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- 21 The action we take to put matters right in response to a complaint, can include any combination of the remedies set out in the list below
- an apology
  - an explanation of what went wrong and why
  - remedial action, which may include reviewing or changing a decision on the service given to an individual complainant
  - putting things right (for example change of procedures to prevent future difficulties of a similar kind, either for the complainant or others)
  - training or supervision of staff (but we will not inform you of any individual actions with staff members)
  - financial compensation (if there is evidence of financial loss)
- 22 We will log all complaints we receive so that we can monitor the types of problems, the services they relate to, the best way to resolve them, and how long we are taking to deal with them. This also helps us to take a closer look at how we can improve our own service delivery.
- 23 Complaints, together with associated themes and learning points, will be monitored by the London Borough of Sutton through monthly contract management meetings.