

COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Introduction

Off the Record (OTR) recognises the right of service users and other members of the community to complain about the organisation's services and indeed views complaints as a valuable form of feedback about their services. OTR undertakes regular monitoring to evaluate all of its services and is committed to ensuring that service users are well informed enabling them to make comments and complaints when required. As a progressive, young person centred organisation we welcome feedback and want to hear from all service users. We want to encourage, listen to and where possible include the views of service users in our practice and services.

'When Off the Record receives a complaint, particularly if it is from a service user, it will be resolved quickly and efficiently wherever possible.'

2. Terminology

It is important that we define the difference between a 'comment' and a 'complaint':-

3. What is a 'Comment'?

When a service user or other visitor to OTR makes a comment - for example offering an idea on how we can improve the delivery of the service - but does not want to make a complaint.

4. What is a 'Complaint'?

It is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not. For example a complaint could be about:-

- Our service standards or quality.
- Our staff's professional conduct.
- Young people being able to access our services.
- Our policies.
- Any form of discrimination.

A complaint could include one or more of the following problems:

- We provide a poor quality service or make a mistake.
- An employee's behaviour causes upset.
- We delay in providing a service.
- We fail to provide a service.
- We unfairly discriminate against a service user.

5. Ways to Complain

If a service user or other visitor to OTR wishes to complain, it should first be established whether the situation can be resolved informally. The staff member/volunteer at the point of service delivery should do this if possible but never with the intention of preventing a genuine complaint. If this is not possible and the complainant still wishes to proceed with their complaint they can do this by:-

- informing a member of staff verbally who will immediately record the details,
- telephoning one of our sites,
- writing via a letter or an email.
- completing an OTR complaint form, which are located at the three OTR sites (Bath, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton) or can be downloaded from the website (see Appendix 1).

6. How will OTR deal with a Complaint?

Stage 1 – Primary Resolution

OTR will aim to deal with all complaints at the point of service delivery.

When a complaint is received by a member of staff they will:

- Immediately record all the information regarding the complainant or their representative's issues of concern.
- If the feedback is via the OTR Complaints Form then an assessment will be made by the manager or project lead for the service which the complaint is against. They will determine whether the issues being highlighted can be dealt with under this 'Primary Resolution' stage.
- If possible, taking into consideration the issues being highlighted, staff will try to resolve the issue within 24 hours if not straight away.
- If the issue cannot be resolved straight away or within 24 hours the complaint will pass to Stage 2 'Senior Manager Resolution'.

Stage 2 – Senior Manager Resolution

As an outcome of the 'Primary Resolution' stage, either the Head of Counselling and Outreach (for complaints regarding the Site Drop-In, Counselling or Outreach services) or the Director (all other complaints) will become involved at this stage. If the complainant specifically requests that the Director deal with their complaint then this will be honoured:-

- The Head of Counselling and Outreach/Director will contact the complainant within 5 working days and provide the individual with a date when they should receive feedback from OTR on the result of their investigation.
- The Head of Counselling and Outreach/Director will aim to resolve the issue within 10 working days.

Stage 3 – Board of Management

If the individual making the complaint is not satisfied with the response they receive at Stage 2 they can ask the complaint to be considered by the Board of Management.

A panel comprising three members of OTR's "Board of Management" will be designated to investigate at this stage, one of whom will chair the proceedings.

The Board of Management representatives will aim to:-

- Send an acknowledgement to the complainant within 2 working days. This will include the contact details of the person who is chairing the panel of representatives from the Board of Management.
- Respond to the complaint within 10 days. However this may take longer if the Board of Management panel needs to be convened.

Stage 4 – Independent Advocate

If, after Stage 3 has been completed, the complainant is still not satisfied or they feel the complaint has not been properly handled then OTR must advise the complainant of their rights to take the matter to an independent advocate from another organisation or body. Suggested parties include:

Director, Children's Services, Bath & North East Somerset Council, PO Box 25, Riverside, Temple Street, Keynsham BS31 1DN Tel: 01225 394477 Email: childrens_services@bathnes.gov.uk

Mr Don Foster MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA Tel: 020 7219 3000

7. Record of Complaints

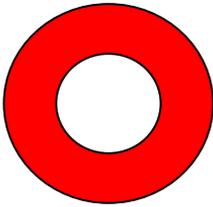
Complaints will be stored for two years and each complaint will be reviewed after twelve months. OTR will use this information to improve its services to young people and the wider community.

8. Data Protection Act 1998

OTR has to comply with this Act. This means that the member of staff or Board of Management dealing with the complaint must inform the complainant that under the Data Protection Act their information will only be accessed by those who need it in order to comprehensively respond to their comment or complaint. The complainant must further be informed that their information may also have to be shared with other members of staff and volunteers within OTR.

Document Details

Policy Owner:	Jocelyne Tagg
Date of Last Revision:	September 2009
Date of Next Review:	September 2011
Signed:	Jon Doble – Chairman OTR Management Board



off the record

YOUR COMMENT OR COMPLAINT

Off the Record recognises the right of young people and other members of the community to complain or comment about the organisation’s services and indeed views complaints as a valuable form of feedback about our services. You may find it helpful to refer to our “Complaints Policy” – for a copy please contact us.

Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Daytime Phone Number	
Evening Phone Number	

Which Off the Record Service is your Comment or Complaint about?	
What happened / did not happen? (Please include date(s) and place(s) if appropriate.)	

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please give this form to a member of staff *or* fold it up and put it in one of our Comments boxes. Alternatively, it can be posted to **The Director, Off the Record, Open House Centre, Manvers Street, Bath, BA1 1JW.**