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**Complaints Booklet**

A. Responding To Complaints

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**NUGENT’S DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT:**

***‘An expression of dissatisfaction with any of Nugent’s services or projects which requires a response.’***

**THE POSITIVE VALUE OF COMPLAINTS**

* A measure of quality (or lack of)
* A catalyst for change
* Aid future planning
* Reflects user opinions and views
* Project company image
* ***They can be an early warning system***

**NUGENT’S COMPLAINTS SYSTEM**

Nugent operates a three stage complaints system:

***STAGE 1*** Local Resolution, complaints are dealt with at the point of service.

***STAGE 2*** Complaints are dealt with by someone outside of the service being complained about.

***STAGE 3*** Review, the complainant can ask to have their Stage 2 complaint reviewed if they are unhappy with the way in which it was investigated

***For copies of the Complaints Policy and Procedures see Book 2 of Nugent’s Quality Manuals***

A simple way of thinking of a complaint is as:

***an expression of dissatisfaction, when expectations, even unreasonable ones, are not met***

All users of our services have the right to complain

There are no rules about what can, or cannot be complained about

Complaints should be looked at as a constructive method of gaining feedback on how our users view our services

How we deal with complaints, queries and concerns will affect our reputation with our users and the wider community that we serve

**IF SOMEONE COMES TO YOU WITH A COMPLAINT**

Be polite, courteous and helpful. ***It makes A BIG***

***DIFFERENCE!***

* Build rapport
* Establish what their concerns are
* Check and show understanding
* Present your position— what you can do
* Reach agreement on what the complaint is and their desired outcome
* ***Thank the person.***

**DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT**

When you encounter someone who wants to make a complaint:

1. Deal with it there and then. *Take responsibility for it*
2. Get and record the facts
3. If you are unable to deal with it, know who can and inform the complainant who will be dealing with their complaint
4. Know your management structure
5. If you can resolve it, do so
6. Determine if the complainant is satisfied with what you propose to do about their complaint

***If they are not satisfied explain how to progress their complaint to the next stage***

All complaints require some form of investigation which often involves speaking to people and looking at records.

As a general rule the more complex the complaint the bigger the Investigation. In most cases complex complaints are investigated at Stage 2 by someone outside of the service

All complaints result in a written record, regardless of the size of the investigation

**All Investigations Should Be:**

* Factual
* A record of what you did
* Honest
* Thorough
* Legible
* Record any necessary actions

**Investigations Should Not:**

* Be written hastily, dismissively or seek to blame
* Make statements beyond knowledge and recollections
* Comment on the aftermath rather than the incident
* Make subjective statements
* Comment on what you would have done in the situation
* Make up facts/events

**SOME COMPLAINTS WILL REQUIRE A WRITTEN RESPONSE**

Great care needs to be taken when drafting written responses.

**Poor Responses**

* Poor vocabulary and grammar
* Defensive rather than constructive
* Do not answer all the concerns raised
* Do not apologise when appropriate
* Do not demonstrate that any investigation has been undertaken
* Do not mention complaint status (upheld/not upheld)
* Do not mention action to be taken as a result of the findings
* Do not explain options available to the complainant
* Not dealt with in agreed timescales

**Poor Responses Can Result In**

* Letters redrafted several time before being fit to send out
* Unable to meet deadlines
* Complaints being dealt with unnecessary at the next stage
* Further complainant dissatisfaction
* Problems if complaints forms part of a litigation case (very rare occurrence)

**Drafting A Good Response**

* Read the complaint
* Identify the key issues
* Address each identified issue
* Think of the complainant not yourself
* Give explanations
* Avoid technical language
* Avoid being too verbose
* Apologise if appropriate
* Imagine you are speaking to the complainant
* Outline corrective action taken to prevent reoccurrence
* Write in active not passive tense
* Leave the complainant feeling that they have been taken seriously/listened to
* Avoid being patronising
* Ensure your facts are correct

**What Leaves The Complainant Dissatisfied**

* Not addressing/answering key concerns
* Not acknowledging feelings/perceptions
* Being technical, patronising or defensive
* Including issues not relevant to the concerns raised
* Factual inaccuracies and silly mistakes
* Trying to impress by using complex language “showing off”
* No details of appropriate changes/improvements given

**How To Ensure The Tone Of Your Response Is Right**

* Get someone else to read it first
* Ask yourself would you be satisfied with this response
* Have all points been addressed, including any you are unable to deal with
* Remember to address the reader directly using short simple sentences, explain the terminology/abbreviations used and avoid jargon

**Some Stock Phrases For Complaint Responses**

* I write further to your letter dated…
* Your concerns have been investigated by….., who would like to apologise for the delay in responding to your concerns. This was due to…
* In discussion with….., …..
* I was sorry if you found xxxxxx to be upsetting as this was not the intention.
* The normal practice is xxxxxx. I am sorry that in this instance this did not occur.
* I apologise for any additional anxiety this caused.
* As a result of your letter dated ……
* I trust that my letter has answered the issues you raised and I sincerely regret that this situation arose.
* It is always our intention to provide excellent and responsive care for service users and I am sorry if this was not the case.
* Your experience of our services falls short of the standards we set for service users and I would like to apologise, as would all staff concerned, for the stress and anxiety this experience has caused you.
* X would like to apologise if the {job title} appeared rude at anytime during the conversation with you. He/she would like you to know that this was not their intention.
* If you require further information or are dissatisfied with this response please write to X or contact them on ……..
* X will be happy to write to you with further details/discuss your concerns/arrange a meeting with relevant staff
* I enclose a copy of the leaflet ………………………. Which gives full details of the further courses of action available to you
* Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. The opinions of those who use our services give us valuable insight into the services that we provide and areas where improvements can be made.

**This handbook does not form part of Nugent’s Complaints Policy/Procedures but is provided as guidance which will enable employees to successfully implement the complaints procedures.**