



For a brighter future,  
free from abuse.

# Compliments, Complaints and Comments Policy

## Introduction

Safe Steps (we) endeavor to ensure that anyone who has contact with the charity receives a positive experience. However, it is recognised that occasionally, for whatever reason, this may not always be the case.

If this happens, Safe Steps want to resolve any issues quickly and efficiently, incorporating anything learned into procedures, to help improve the way we work going forward.

This policy provides a summary of our commitment to manage and administer compliments, complaints and comments from clients/other stakeholders.

## Aims

- Safe Steps are committed to encouraging clients and stakeholders to come forward with any complaints/comments about the services delivered. This is to ensure that quality is protected, and client's needs are appropriately met.
- We also undertake to monitor all complaints/comments to ensure that they are used to improve the range and quality of service delivery on a continuous basis.
- We will also ensure that all clients and stakeholders have access to clear information on how to voice complaints/comments. Clients will be provided with the support they need in order to make their views known.
- Safe Steps will also ensure that no clients are disadvantaged or treated less favourably as a result of making a complaint or providing feedback regarding the service(s) they have received.

## Consent

Where a complaint involving a client is made by someone other than a client, the client's permission must be obtained before any further action is taken, e.g., if a member of their family wishes to make a complaint on their behalf.

In cases where the client lacks capacity, evidence of this must be provided by the complainant, together with evidence of their relationship to the client. The complainant will also need to be able to prove why they feel they are an appropriate person to initiate and manage the complaint, on the client's behalf.

We will consider the information submitted and notify the complainant in a timely manner, as to whether or not it is possible for us to respond to the complaint.

Children and young people have the same right to make a complaint as adults have. There is no set age for being able to make a complaint. Please see our Young Persons Complaints, Compliments and Comments policy – Your Right to be Heard.

## **Initiating a complaint**

When someone is not satisfied with the service they have received from Safe Steps we want to make it as easy as possible for them to approach us and report it.

Most complainants prefer to telephone in the first instance. When this happens, we will record the complaint as either Informal or Formal.

Complainants can also contact us through our website, via email, or letter. Irrespective of the way we receive the complaint, we will record the complaint appropriately.

Where a client needs one-to-one support to make their complaint, the Safe Steps CEO will arrange for an appropriate member of staff to be available or will source a representative from another charity, with whom we have reciprocal arrangements.

## **Instances where we may not respond to a complaint**

On very rare occasions Safe Steps may choose not to respond to a complaint. These include:

- When a complaint is about something that Safe Steps has no direct connection to. We may choose to reply to clear our name but we are not obliged to.
- When someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that we have already responded to. They will be given escalation points but we may choose not to reply again – we will always inform the complainant of our decision to do this.
- When a complainant is being obviously abusive, prejudiced or offensive in their manner.
- When a complainant is harassing a staff member.
- When a complaint is incoherent or illegible and we have made every effort to decipher the content, including contacting the complainant for clarification.
- When a complaint has clearly been sent to us and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email. In this instance we can choose whether it is necessary for us to reply or not.

When a complaint is made anonymously, Safe Steps obviously cannot respond to the complainant, but we will investigate the complaint, using the information to improve our services in any way that we can.

## How to get in contact

### Compliment or comment:

- talk to your keyworker, IDVA or Service Manager
- send an email to [enquiries@safesteps.org](mailto:enquiries@safesteps.org)
- give your feedback when you finish your support or leave refuge.

### Complaint:

If you are unhappy with an area of our work, please email [enquiries@safesteps.org](mailto:enquiries@safesteps.org) or post your complaint to:

Director of Services  
Safe Steps  
4 West Road  
Westcliff-on-Sea  
Essex SS0 9DA

We will aim to get back to you as soon as possible and within 40 days at the latest.

## Outcomes

Outcomes of a complaint may include:

- An apology,
- providing a further service,
- responding to a client's specific requirement (for example, access or communication needs),
- providing information,
- a review of working practice,
- formal training or guidance for staff,
- any other action that is appropriate and agreed by all parties.

## Using information from feedback

Feedback from clients, or other parties, is invaluable and welcomed by Safe Steps. It provides an opportunity for us to review processes and practices, and make improvements, which could include (but is not limited to): formal training, team meeting agenda items, e-learning.

Reports are compiled for the Board of Trustees on complaint volumes, themes, outcomes and trends.

## **Other policies**

If safeguarding issues, or serious breaches of Safe Step's Codes and Policies are of concern at any stage in the complaints process, they should be discussed immediately with the CEO.

## **Persistent or abusive complainants**

Appropriate action will be taken to manage persistent, malicious, or abusive complainants. Where applicable, this could ultimately result in the removal of a service. The Board of Trustees will provide the final decision with the CEO as to whether a service should be removed from a client.

## **Roles**

For the purposes of this document, the term 'staff' refers to any member of Safe Steps' personnel including: employees, volunteers, trustees, consultants, contractors, students, or any other persons on a work placement.

All Safe Steps staff are expected to comply with the policy and to make clients aware of how a complaint can be made and how it will be managed.

Failure to comply with the complaints policy, and related operating process, or any attempt to conceal a complaint, may be dealt with via disciplinary procedures.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring that Safe Steps has an appropriate Complaints Policy.

The CEO is responsible for:

- Registering complaints at each stage of the process,
- ensuring that the electronic complaint records are updated regularly,
- producing reports for the Board of Trustees,
- for ensuring that learning and best practice are shared throughout the charity,
- supporting complainants who need help to make a complaint,
- monitoring staff compliance with the policy,
- providing guidance and taking decisions about the handling of any complaints.

## External reviews

At the end of the Safe Steps complaints process, complainants who remain dissatisfied with an outcome and appeal decision, will be provided with details of the Commissioner of the service relating to their complaint, for them to pursue the matter further if they so wish.

If you feel we have broken the law or there is a serious risk of harm to our beneficiaries, you can contact:

- The Charity Commission Complain about a charity - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))
- The Fundraising Regulator - visit [www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints/make-complaint](http://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints/make-complaint) if you are unhappy with our fundraising activities
- The Information Commissioner's Office if you are unhappy with how we use or look after your information - <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint>.

## Document information

Policy owner:	Safe Steps
Policy approved by:	Senior Management Team
Date policy approved:	July 2024
Next review date	Every 3 years or if change occurs