

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Families Forward is committed to providing the best possible service to the families with whom we work, and we try to listen to what they need. We acknowledge, however, that there will be occasions when people may not be happy with some aspect of our provision. This policy exists to make it easier for you to tell us when you are unhappy, or indeed when you have any comment to make about Families Forward. All complaints will be taken seriously and we aim to treat you with respect and consideration throughout the complaints process.

1. What kind of circumstances may give rise to a complaint?

- You believe you have been treated unfairly on the grounds of your gender/race/religion/age/sexuality or for any similar reason
- You feel that we have failed to provide information about Families Forward or its services
- You feel that we have failed to provide a key service
- You feel you have experienced an unreasonable delay in receiving a service
- You feel that a service provided has been inadequate
- You believe that our staff have been rude or unhelpful
- You disagree with a decision we have made or a policy we operate

2. What should I do to complain informally?

You can make your complaint to the member of staff concerned, or to any line manager. Any worker will be pleased to tell you who is the most appropriate person to approach. This may be done in person, or by telephone or email. We aim to listen to what you have to say, to apologise whenever necessary, and to try to agree a solution with you. We will try to deal with your complaint to your satisfaction immediately; however, there will be occasions when this may not be possible (for example during holiday periods). If there will be a delay in responding to your complaint you will be told, and we will reply as quickly as possible, either verbally or in writing if you wish. If you remain dissatisfied with us or with our response you should use the formal procedure outlined below.

3. What should I do to make a formal complaint?

You may use the formal complaints procedure at any time: you do not have to complain informally first if you believe that your complaint is too serious for that approach.

Attached to this policy you will find a basic form, which you may use to make your complaint; if you would prefer, you may write a letter instead. In either case, you should feel free to obtain assistance with writing your complaint if you need it; such assistance could be given by a friend or family member, a Citizens Advice Bureau or Advocacy group or a similar organisation. You should then post or hand-deliver your complaint to Families Forward, making the envelope clearly "Private and Confidential, for the attention of the Complaints Officer".

4. What will happen after I complain?

Families Forward will aim to acknowledge receipt of your formal complaint within five working days; this will be done by letter, so it is important that you provide us with the correct postal address. This letter will also tell you what steps will need to be taken to investigate your complaint: dependent on the circumstances of the complaint, we may ask you to meet with us to discuss the problem (in which case you are welcome to be accompanied by a person of your choice from outside Families Forward), and we may allocate responsibility for this meeting and the subsequent investigation to the appropriate line manager. If your complaint is about a member of staff, it will be passed immediately to the appropriate line manager; the Complaints Officer will write to you to tell you that this has been done and to explain that our internal inquiry process has begun. We aim to resolve all complaints quickly, and to keep you informed throughout the process. You will receive a full written response, usually within 28 days; if there will be any further delay, you will be informed. This letter will include information on what to do if you are still dissatisfied.

5. Will my complaint be confidential?

Your complaint may be seen by managers or Board members of Families Forward as part of the investigation process but we will make every effort to safeguard your privacy; your complaint will not become 'public knowledge' unless you so wish. You should be aware, however, that if your complaint is specifically about a member of staff or a Board Member of Families Forward, it will be necessary for that person to be told that a complaint has been lodged against him/her, to allow the investigation to proceed.

6. What if I am still unhappy – can I appeal?

You can appeal if you are unhappy about any aspect of the formal procedure outlined above, including the final response. You cannot go directly to the appeal stage unless you have used the formal procedure. If you wish to appeal, this should be done in writing, and you should post or deliver this form to Families Forward, making the envelope "Private and Confidential: for the attention of the Chair of the Board". Again, you can obtain assistance with this, as explained above.

7. What will happen if I appeal?

You will receive written acknowledgement of your appeal usually within five working days, along with information as to when and how it will be dealt with. A panel (consisting of three Board members) will normally be formed to consider your appeal. You may attend this meeting (bringing a person of your choice from outside Families Forward, if you wish), or make written comments if you would prefer. Your appeal and the original complaint will be considered in detail, and you will receive a written response within 28 days of the hearing. Families Forward will make every effort to comply with the decision or recommendations of the appeal panel.

8. What if I am still dissatisfied following an appeal?

The appeal stage is the final internal one as far as Families Forward are concerned. If you remain unhappy, you are entitled to contact your local councillor or MP. You are, of course, entitled to do this directly without using our complaints procedure at all, although obviously we would encourage you to tell us first and allow us to try to resolve matters if you are unhappy.

9. What should I do if I wish to praise Families Forward, or just make a suggestion or comment about something?

Families Forward welcomes all comments and suggestions, and tries to take account of these where possible when planning work, etc. Please feel free to write to us, telephone, fax or email, or use the review process for your work.

COMPLAINTS FORM

Your name

Your address

Your telephone number

What is your complaint? (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Ideally, what would you like us to do about it?

Your signature

Today's date

Please return as directed on the Policy attached

Please help us to monitor our complaints by providing the following information, which will be kept confidential, and will not be considered alongside your complaint; tick the appropriate category in each case:

Your gender

Male		Female	
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Do you consider yourself to have a disability

Yes

No

Your ethnic origin

Bangladeshi	
Black-African	
Black-Caribbean	
Black-Other	
Chinese	
Indian	
Irish	
Mixed Heritage	
Other	
Pakistani	
White	