



OP.14
Service User Feedback and Complaints Policy
V2.0

Approved: March 2023

Ver	Purpose/ Change Summary	Approved by Board	Effective Date	Next Revision
1.0	Original Policy	21/11/2016	22/11/2016	
2.0	Review of policy, updated definitions, procedures, appeals, confidentiality/data protection. Edited for ease of use, language edits. Clarification re social media messages. Minor edits to poster.	28/3/2023	2023	Q1/2025

Overview:

Epilepsy Ireland welcomes feedback from service users relating to our service. As an organisation, we are committed to ensuring that feedback; comments, compliments and complaints from those using our services are acknowledged, reviewed, acted upon and responded to and that the learning derived from this feedback informs how our work is delivered.

General feedback / comments and compliments can be given directly to staff members or emailed to info@epilepsy.ie.

The organisation is committed to ensuring that where feedback is a complaint; the complaint will be dealt with in a fair and impartial manner that safeguards the rights of the complainant and employees. Complainants will not experience any victimisation or suffer any retribution for making a complaint, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not.

A single page poster called 'Feedback / Complaints Procedure' for service users is attached at Appendix 1 and should be displayed in all Epilepsy Ireland offices and on our website.

Contents:

1. Definitions
2. Purpose
3. Scope

Complaints Procedure

4. Reporting Procedure
5. Recording and Documenting Complaints
6. Confidentiality / Data Protection
7. Appendix 1

1. Definitions

- 1.1 The 'Complainant' is the person who is making the complaint.
- 1.2 'Complaint' - when a person has made clear that they are (either verbally or in writing) making a complaint. Comments in response to EI social media posts, casual comments to staff, or minor issues that are dealt with on the spot, are not considered to be a complaint. Written complaints may be received in several ways, including letters, emails, or direct messages on EI social media channels. Written complaints received via social media direct messages will be acknowledged via the same channel and the complainant advised of the formal complaints' procedure. The complaint will be managed thereafter by email.
- 1.3 The 'Complaints Officer' is the person in the organisation who is assigned to managing formal complaints and ensuring that they are addressed by working with the relevant members of the management/ staff team. The Complaints Officer records statistical data and completes and returns details of any formal complaints to the HSE on a quarterly basis.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This policy and corresponding procedures are in place to ensure transparency and clarity in our processes for service users, staff members and volunteers (workers) of the organisation.

- 2.2 The purpose of the policy is to enable people who use our service to express any problems or concerns that they may have, and to have them resolved quickly and satisfactorily.
- 2.3 As an organisation that receives funding from the HSE, our policy aligns where relevant to the 2017 HSE Policy - The Management of Service User Feedback for Comments, Compliments and Complaints - [HSE 'Policy Your Service, Your Say'](#)

3. Scope

- 3.1 The policy applies to any person who has used or is currently using Epilepsy Ireland's services. This may include a member or non-member of Epilepsy Ireland engaged with our services, a professional utilising our services, or any member of the public who has engaged with the organisation and is dissatisfied with our service.
- 3.2 In the case of complaints relating to abuse of a vulnerable adult or of a child, the separate Epilepsy Ireland Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy and/or Child Protection policy must be followed.

Complaints Procedure

4. Reporting Procedures

All Epilepsy Ireland staff and volunteers may be approached with informal feedback or minor complaints and the organisation ensures that they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to receive and deal with such feedback.

In addition, all staff and volunteers will be provided with guidance in the application of this policy and in directing potential complainants to follow the relevant procedures.

All staff have the responsibility of ensuring that the complaints policy is available to their service users and that the complaints poster (Appendix 1) is displayed in all Epilepsy Ireland premises.

If an individual wishes to make a complaint, they should follow the procedures set out below. Epilepsy Ireland will endeavour to resolve all complaints as close to the point of contact as possible. We will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 (working) days and outline the next steps.

Vexatious or malicious complaints will not be accepted.

A complainant can withdraw a complaint at any time.

4.1 Stage One – Informal - Local Resolution of your Complaint

A verbal complaint may be made to any staff member and may be resolved at an informal level where the complainant is satisfied that their complaint has been resolved.

4.2 Stage Two – Formal - Written Complaint (Pre-Investigation)

A written complaint may be submitted to the Complaints Officer in Epilepsy Ireland who will seek to resolve the complaint in conjunction with other staff and managers relevant to the complaint. Your complaint should be acknowledged within 5 working days from submission and resolved within 30 days.

4.3 Stage Three – Written Complaint (Investigation)

Where a written complaint is not resolved at the pre-investigation stage (Stage two) an investigation will be undertaken by a member of the management team as designated by the CEO and a written report submitted to resolve the complaint. If extensive investigation is required, the complainant should be notified and receive a progress report at least every 30 days.

4.4 Independent Review

If the complainant is unhappy with the final outcome of the organisations investigation of the complaint, they will be advised of their right to refer their complaint to the [Office of the Ombudsman - Complaints](#) or [Ombudsman for Children - Complaints](#).

5. Recording and Documenting Complaints

- 5.1 Epilepsy Ireland's Complaints Officer will record all formal complaints and report the data to the CEO for learning and statistical purposes. Formal complaints will be reported to the HSE using agreed procedures.
- 5.3 Where risk or organisational quality is a concern, the Complaints Officer should inform the CEO or Director of Services, so that further steps may be undertaken if required, regardless of whether the complaint is related to their area of work. Learning from complaints includes examining the underlying situation which caused the complaint to arise and embedding any necessary changes in the organisation as a result.

6. Confidentiality / Data Protection

- 6.1 Maintaining privacy and confidentiality of service user information is a basic principle of managing service user feedback, including complaints. It is the role of all staff to ensure that privacy and confidentiality is maintained. All personal information is kept strictly confidential within the organisation and complaints will be discussed on a need to know basis with relevant parties only. Any reports produced on trends and data will not identify complainants.
- 6.2 The organisation's Confidentiality Policy will be followed relating to service user complaints.
- 6.3 All written contact and documentation relating to a service user complaint can be accessed by the complainant through the Freedom of Information Acts.
- 6.4 The Data Protection Acts (1988-2018) place an obligation on the organisation to safeguard the right of individuals in relation to the processing of their personal data. This applies to both personal data of service users and staff.
- 6.5 Under the Data Protection Acts, personal information should only be used or disclosed for the purpose for which it was collected or another directly related purpose. Information required for reporting and statistical purposes will be anonymised and all identifiable data will be removed.
- 6.6 The principles of natural justice and fairness require that any persons directly affected by a complaint be:
 - a. informed of the complaint,
 - b. informed of the conclusions reached following investigation of the complaint and of the findings which informed these conclusions, and
 - c. afforded the opportunity to respond to any adverse findings.

Appendix 1: Feedback / Complaints Procedure Poster



[GRAPHIC]

Are you happy with our service?

Epilepsy Ireland welcomes feedback from service users relating to our service and we are committed to ensuring that any complaints are dealt with in a fair consistent way.

If you would like to make a general comment or pass on a compliment, these can be given directly to staff members or emailed to info@epilepsy.ie.

If you are unhappy about the service that we provided to you, we would like the chance to put things right. If you feel that we have been unwilling to help you or slow in helping you with your query, or in any other way have not provided the best service to you, please let us know so that we can improve.

Anonymous complaints cannot be formally investigated but will be noted for information.

We have a Complaints Policy which you can request, or you can download it from our website at [Epilepsy Ireland - Dealing with Complaints](#)

Do you need help making a complaint?

You can ask someone - a friend or relative to help with your complaint.

How do I make a complaint?

Most problems can be sorted out locally, informally and verbally. First, tell us what the problem is and give us a chance to put things right for you.

Making a formal complaint

If that does not work, you can make a formal complaint by writing to our Complaints Officer at Epilepsy Ireland, 249, Crumlin Road, Dublin 12 or by emailing info@epilepsy.ie letting us know that you wish to make a formal complaint and that it has not been resolved after talking to our staff.

How long will it take?

We try to resolve all complaints within 30 days. If it is very complicated, we will keep in contact with you regularly and endeavour to conclude all investigations within 6 months of the receipt of the complaint.

What if I am still not happy?

If you are still not happy after your complaint has been formally dealt with you have the right to refer your complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman / Ombudsman for Children - complaints@ombudsman.ie