

**RICHMOND FELLOWSHIP**

**Feedback (Complaints, Comments and Suggestions) Procedure**

**1. Comments, Compliments and Suggestions**

Comments, compliments, and suggestions can be made directly to any Richmond Fellowship staff member or received through other means such as suggestion boxes where these are available in the services.

All comments, suggestions or compliments received from an internal or external stakeholder will be recorded by a staff member who received it as soon as possible under “events” tab on service’s RF Connect. A guidance on how to record comment, suggestions and compliments can be found under guidance documents tab on RF Connect (“Recording and reporting on compliments and suggestions on RF Connect”).

The Tier 5/6 manager should utilise the “Service compliments, suggestions, and other feedback” report available on the service’s RF Connect reports tab to review all received feedback monthly. This feedback will also be discussed in the monthly team meetings to inform discussions on what works well, celebrate achievements and plan any action required to address suggestions and comments. The Tier 5/6 manager will record any action taken as a result of the feedback received by updating the relevant “event” entry on RF Connect.

When giving feedback people may choose to have their name recorded with their comments and suggestions or to ask for these to be anonymous. However, if they would like specific feedback about what has happened as a result of their comments or suggestions, they will need to agree to have their name recorded.

**2. Complaints**

**Informal Complaints**

RF will encourage people who have concerns to try and engage with staff to resolve them at this stage. Most complaints can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion. Staff will always ask the person expressing a concern if they want their complaint dealt with informally or formally.

**Internal informal complaints**

Services will maintain a record of informal complaints made by people who use the services which should be recorded as soon as possible after being received.

Informal complaint by a person using the service will be recorded in their file through RF Connect case note using the relevant event type (*informal complaint received*), and the case note tags.

Any action taken to resolve the informal complaint must be recorded as a case note using the event type “informal complaint resolved”.

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Staff should notify their line manager through the RF Connect task of any informal complains received and whether they were resolved, by tasking the line manager on RF Connect.

### ***External informal complaints***

Staff must record all informal complaints made by an external person (e.g. family, carer, care-coordinator). An informal complaint made by an external stakeholder will be recorded by a staff member who received it as soon as possible under the “events” tab on service’s RF Connect. A “Recording and reporting on compliments and suggestions on RF Connect” guidance on how to record the above can be found in RF Connect under guidance documents tab.

Staff should notify their line manager through tasking on RF Connect of any informal external complains received. The Tier 5/6 manager will record any action taken as a result of the informal complaint received by updating the relevant entry on RF Connect.

The Tier 5/6 manager will regularly review the records of all internal and external informal complaints as part of their monitoring of the service and to ensure that appropriate action was taken to address the issue. These findings should also be discussed with the team in the monthly team meetings to inform any required actions and any learning shared.

PQI may review these records at service quality reviews to determine how this feedback had improved or led to changes in the service.

If it is not possible to resolve the complaint informally it will be necessary to use the formal complaints process.

### **Formal Complaints**

Depending on the nature and seriousness of a formal complaint the matter might be investigated by the service’s Tier 5/6 manager or an investigating officer, external to the service (e.g. Tier 5/6 manager from another service or a Tier 4 manager) appointed, usually by a Tier 3/4 manager.

In both cases the investigating officer will be a single point of contact for the complainant at stage 1 and 2 formal complaint investigation. The investigating officer will be responsible for keeping the complainant updated about the progress of the complaint investigation, drafting the complaint response, and communicating the outcome to the complainant. They will also be responsible for keeping the relevant service/central department fully updated about the progress and the outcome of their investigation.

It will be the responsibility of the investigating officer to liaise with all the relevant staff and individuals to obtain pertinent information in relation to all elements of the complaint investigation.

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A copy of the complaint (where applicable e.g., letter, email) and all the correspondence with the complainant such as the acknowledgment, holding and outcome letters will be uploaded to RF Connect.

***Letter templates to use are provided with this policy and procedure on the intranet.***

Richmond Fellowship has a two-stage complaint process.

**STAGE 1:** The staff member who received a formal complaint must complete an incident report on RF Connect. They should consider the nature of the complaint and assign the most appropriate incident level considering whether the formal complaint requires an escalation to the senior management (for example if the complaint was also a safeguarding incident or there was a risk of media attention. Refer to A&I classification guidance available with the A&I policy on intranet for advice on incident levels).

If the formal complaint was made verbally, staff should write down complainant's verbal statement and ask to confirm that it represents the issues they wished to raise and outcomes they would like. The content of this written statement must be agreed with the complainant and if possible, signed by them. This document should be treated as a formal complaint and uploaded to RF Connect (see section 6 for guidance).

**All formal complaints about a staff member must be treated as confidential and reported as a minimum level 2 incident.**

***For guidance on how to record confidential incidents and upload correspondence including confidential on RF Connect refer to sections 6 and 7 in this document.***

In most cases the Tier 5/6 manager will be the investigating officer responsible for investigating a Stage 1 complaint received at their service. However, it is the matter of the complaint that will determine the most appropriate management level at which the Stage 1 formal complaint will be investigated (e.g., if the complaint is about Tier 6 manager it will be investigated by Tier 5/4 manager). The Tier 2 manager has the discretion to have a formal complaint dealt with at a senior level from the outset if this was felt to be appropriate to the circumstances.

Within 3 working days of the complaint being received the investigating officer will send an acknowledgment letter to the complainant to confirm the receipt of the complaint and their understanding of the issues and outcomes the person is seeking.

A formal response regarding the complaint investigation and its outcome will be made to the complainant within 10 working days of the complaint being received using the complaint outcome letter template. Should the complaint investigation take longer than 10 working days the investigating officer will write to the

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complainant to update them on the investigation using the holding letter template. The complainant will be provided with an update every 10 working days until the investigation is completed. The complainant must be informed about the progress and the outcome of their complaint in writing to ensure that the process is fair, robust and transparent and there is an audit trail. If the complainant requires communication to be in another format this should be provided and confirmed on the complaint tracker.

Should the complaint be upheld the complainant will receive apologies, explanation of what actions have been/will be taken as a result using the outcome letter template.

A complaints tracker which forms part of the complaint incident form will be completed by the investigating officer at each point of contact with the complainant until the complaint has been resolved. Where the investigating officer does not have access to the location's RF Connect they will keep the service's Tier 5/6 or Tier 4 manager regularly informed so that they can update the tracker.

The complainant has 10 working days from the day they receive the response to appeal the outcome of the complaint. After that the complaint (tracker) will be closed.

All attempts at contact with the complainant, both successful and unsuccessful, must be documented on the complaint incident report and in case notes (if complainant is using a service).

Central departments do not usually have access to RF Connect and all complaints received by those departments should be emailed to the Quality and Compliance (Q&C) team at [pqiservicedesk@richmondfellowship.org.uk](mailto:pqiservicedesk@richmondfellowship.org.uk) Q&C team will not be carrying out investigation but will document the receipt of the complaint and progress of the investigation on RF Connect via an incident report on behalf of a central department.

**For the procedure on escalating complaints received directly in the Head/Regional offices please see section 4.**

**STAGE 2:** If the complainant was not satisfied with the complaint outcome at Stage 1, they can appeal the outcome by contacting Quality and Compliance team. This should be done within 10 working days of receiving an outcome response to the formal complaint at Stage 1.

Appeal will not be accepted simply because the person is unhappy with the outcome. For the complaint to be considered at Stage 2, the complainant will need to outline the basis for their appeal. Appeals will be accepted if:

- Complainant is concerned that there was a weakness in the original complaint investigation, or
- Complainant has new information relating to the original investigation that should be investigated

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By post: Quality and Compliance,  
Richmond Fellowship  
Head Office  
80 Holloway Road  
London N7 8JG

By phone: 020 7697 3300

Email: [complaintsandfeedback@richmondfellowship.org.uk](mailto:complaintsandfeedback@richmondfellowship.org.uk)

The Q&C department will forward the complaint appeal to a manager more senior than the person who investigated the original complaint. This manager (investigating officer) will review the appeal and decide whether to progress the complaint to Stage 2.

The investigating officer will communicate a decision on the appeal within 3 working days of receiving the appeal:

- If the appeal is refused the investigating officer will write to the complainant explaining why their appeal has been declined.
- If the appeal is accepted investigating officer will send the complainant an acknowledgment letter confirming their complaint will be considered at Stage 2 of Richmond Fellowship feedback procedure.

The investigating officer will provide a Stage 2 complaint outcome response to the complainant within 10 working days of the original date of the appeal receipt. If the investigation takes longer than 10 working days, the complainant will be updated about the progress of their complaint appeal every 10 working days until the investigation is completed.

The investigating officer will be responsible for keeping the relevant Tier 4/5/6 managers informed of the progress of the investigation every 10 working days minimum, so they can update the complaint tracker with the progress of the investigation. The complaint outcome letter and other complaint related correspondence (e.g. holding letters etc.) will be shared with the service/central department Tier 4/5/6 manager who would upload them to RF Connect using appropriate sensitivity levels to ensure confidentiality where appropriate.

### 3. Should the complainant still be dissatisfied

If the complainant has gone through all the stages of the complaint process and is still dissatisfied with how their concerns was addressed, they will be provided with options for escalating their complaints

- By post: The Housing Ombudsman (if they are a tenant)  
PO Box 1484  
Unit D, PR2 0ET Preston

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By phone: 0300 111 3000  
 Online: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>  
 email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

- The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman  
0300 061 0614  
<https://www.lgo.org.uk/>
- The funders of the service usually referred to as the Commissioners.

The address and contact telephone numbers for the commissioners, should be made available on the 'Tell Us What You Think' leaflet provided to people we support when joining a service.

People who use services and their supporters can also raise concerns with other people involved with their support such as their GP, Social Worker or Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN).

Very occasionally RF may receive complaints which could be considered inappropriate, repetitive or in some way vexatious. These situation will be handled in a way which is both seen to be fair and transparent but also addresses the needs of the individual submitting the complaint.

#### **4. Managing complaints/compliments received in the Head/Regional offices**

On occasion the complainant will contact the Head Office or the Regional Office to make a complaint or a compliment. The staff member who received the complaint/compliment must notify it to the PQI department as soon as it has been received.

- Complaints/compliments received over the telephone. Staff will take a note of the issues raised by the person and their contact details and email it to the [pqiservicedesk@richmondfellowship.org.uk](mailto:pqiservicedesk@richmondfellowship.org.uk)
- A complaint/compliment letter. Staff member who opened the letter will scan the envelope and the letter and email a digital copy to the email address above.

The Quality and Compliance Team will then escalate the complaint to the relevant operational/central department manager.

#### **5. Unable to Make Contact**

Maintaining contact with a complainant can sometimes be difficult because of a lack of response. The process outlined below has been developed in consultation with people using our services.

The investigating officer will attempt to contact the complainant on three separate occasions using all means of contact that have been identified by the complainant or their representative. If contact remains unsuccessful the investigating officer will write to a complainant at the known address/email explaining that the complaint has been

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closed due to the inability to make contact and giving the person an opportunity to re-engage with the process by contacting the service again.

The relevant manager will update the complaint tracker with unable to make contact as the reason for the complaint to be closed.

### 6. Complaints about staff

Complaints received about RF staff must be treated and recorded in keeping with this policy and procedure but access to incident report and related correspondence will be restricted by using appropriate sensitivity levels to maintain confidentiality and ensuring a fair process.

- Complaints relating to a frontline staff member should be set as “sensitive” to restrict access to Tier 5/6 managers and above.
- Complaints about Tier 5/6 managers must be set to “very sensitive” to restrict access to the report to Tier 4 and above managers.
- Complaints about Tier 4 and above managers must be set to “extremely sensitive”
- The investigating officer will ensure any member of staff about whom a complaint is made is advised of the final outcome. The staff member must be offered support by the investigating officer and any necessary support arranged.

The screenshot shows a form with the following fields and values:

- Form Return ID: 110531657
- Form Version Name: PQI 09.08/21 AS
- Created: By Alicja.Salwa On 12/08/2021 14:23:32
- Last Updated: By Alicja.Salwa On 12/08/2021 14:23:32
- Status: Draft
- Sensitivity Level: Sensitive (dropdown menu is open, showing options: Sensitive, Not Sensitive, Sensitive, Very Sensitive)
- Import From New CSV: file chosen

Buttons at the bottom: Save, Close, Next >>

### 7. Uploading complaint related documents to RF Connect

A copy of the complaint made by or on behalf of a person using the service and all other correspondence relating to the complaint must be uploaded to the person’s file on RF Connect. All contact regarding the complaint procedure must be recorded in person’s case notes.

A copy of a complaint made by an external individual about the service or a staff member and all the relevant correspondence must be uploaded to the service files on RF Connect. Q&C team will do this for complaints concerning central departments.

The name of each uploaded document should include the name of the incident report and whether the document is a copy of a complaint, acknowledgment, holding, outcome letter etc.

All documents must be uploaded as soon as received.

As with the incident reports sensitivity levels must be used to manage access to uploaded copies of confidential complaints and correspondence.

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**New Service File**

**General** | **Linked Records**

Area Name: Central Office  
 Service Name: Dartford Training Location

File Name\*: Choose File | No file chosen  
 File Category: Complaints  
 Description\*: PQI 09.08.21 AS complaint acknowledgement

Areas?   
 Agencies?   
 Clients?

Sensitivity Level: **Not Sensitive** (dropdown menu open showing: Not Sensitive, Sensitive, Very Sensitive)  
 File Status\*  
 Comments

**8. Monitoring and Review**

RF Connect accident and incident form must be used by staff to record all **formal complaints**. A complaint tracker must also be completed. The purpose of the complaint tracker is to evidence that the complaint has been fully investigated and the process outlined in the procedure was followed including the timescales. Guidance on completing the complaint tracker is available in “Guidance on completing accidents and incidents on RF Connect” found on RF Connect home page under guidance documents tab.

Tier 5/6 managers will conduct a quarterly review of all feedback received (formal and informal) as part of their ongoing monitoring of the service quality and to ensure that appropriate action was taken where necessary and learning has been implemented. The following RF Connect reports are available for the managers on the service reports tab to conduct periodic formal complaints reporting and learning reviews.

***RF Connect reports on service reports tab***

“Complaints Tracker Report”

“New Incident Report” – select “complaint” from incident classification

“Service compliments, suggestions and other feedback report”

All complaints are scrutinised and monitored for quality assurance purposes by the Service Assurance Group.

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