

Complaints Procedure

Review September 2027

1. Purpose of the Policy

Dedham Therapy Farm CIC is committed to providing a safe, supportive and high quality service. We recognise that complaints are an important source of feedback and an opportunity to improve our services. All complaints are taken seriously, handled fairly, and dealt with in a timely and transparent manner.

This policy outlines the procedure for raising, managing and resolving complaints, including escalation routes where concerns are not resolved.

2. Principles

- Complaints will be handled respectfully, fairly and without prejudice.
- Complainants will be offered resolution options at the earliest stage possible.
- All complainants will be informed of the next stage of the process in every response.
- Responses will be provided to both the complainant and, where appropriate, the person complained about.
- Written records of all complaints will be maintained for accountability and future reference.
- Complaints involving safeguarding concerns will be referred immediately to a Designated Safeguarding Lead and managed under the safeguarding policy and whistleblowing policy.
- Complaints regarding the SEND provision at Dedham Therapy Farm will be in line with the SEND policy.
- No individual will suffer disadvantage for raising a complaint in good faith.
- This procedure will be applied in line with the [Data Protection Act 2018](#), [UK GDPR](#), relevant commissioning requirements and Dedham Therapy Farm own Data Protection policy

Roles and Responsibilities

- **All staff:** listen respectfully, record concerns, pass complaints to the appropriate manager.
- **Managers:** review complaints, respond within timescales, keep records, identify safeguarding or SEND issues.
- **Senior Manager/Director:** handle escalations, final reviews, vexatious complaint decisions.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** manage any complaint involving safeguarding concerns.
- **Data Protection Lead/Responsible Person:** ensure complaints records are handled in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- **Complainant:** provide information clearly and engage respectfully with the process.

How to Make a Complaint

There are **3 steps**:

Step 1 – Talk to Us

- You should speak to a member of staff or a manager in the first instance.
- We will seek to resolve this informally within 3 working days.
- If the concern is not resolved, the complainant will be directed to Step 2.

Step 2 – Fill in a Complaints Form Complaints Form – Fill in form

- Support will be provided to complete the form if required.
- We will look carefully at what you tell us.
- We will write back to you within **5 working days**.
- We will explain what we have done and what happens next.

Step 3 – Ask for a Review

- If you are not happy with the answer, you can ask us to look again.
- A senior manager or Director will review your complaint.
- We will write to you with our final decision within **a further 5 working days**.

Handling Complaint Campaigns and Vexatious Complainants

Dedham Therapy Farm CIC recognises that the right to raise concerns is important and that complaints are usually made in good faith. However, on rare occasions, complaints may become excessive, persistent, or part of a coordinated campaign that places an unreasonable burden on staff or services.

Definition

A complaint (or complainant) will be considered **vexatious or part of a complaint campaign** if it:

- Repeats the same issues without providing new information or evidence is submitted in excessive volume or frequency and continues after a final response has been issued.
- Is intended to disrupt services rather than seek resolution
- Uses abusive, threatening, or unreasonable language

Managing Vexatious Complaints

Where a complaint is assessed as vexatious or part of a complaint campaign:

- The complaint will still be reviewed to ensure no new or safeguarding concerns are present
- A single point of contact will be assigned for all communication

- Communication methods or frequency will be limited and clearly explained in writing
- Repeated complaints on the same issue will receive a brief response referencing previous outcomes
- A decision will be made to close the complaint if no new matters are raised

Safeguarding and Legitimate Concerns

- Safeguarding concerns will always be investigated, regardless of complaint status
- Complaints involving safety, welfare, or serious misconduct will never be dismissed as vexatious
- Any restrictions applied will be proportionate and reviewed regularly

Review and Record Keeping

- Any decision to manage a complainant under this section will be approved by senior management
- Complaint records, responses, outcomes and actions taken will be stored securely in line with data protection requirements.
- The status will be reviewed periodically to ensure fairness and appropriateness

Dedham Therapy Farm CIC remains committed to listening to concerns while ensuring staff and service users are protected from unreasonable or abusive complaint behaviour.

Links to Related Policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- SEND Policy
- Data Protection Policy