



Complaints Policy

At Dorset Pathways, we firmly believe that receiving feedback in all its forms—whether positive or negative—plays an essential role in our continuous efforts to improve and assess our performance.

As an organization, we are fully committed to upholding the highest standards across all aspects of our work, including service delivery, interactions, and the use of our learning sites.

This commitment extends to actively welcoming input from children, young individuals, parents or guardians, stakeholders, and collaborating partners. We approach complaints with an open mind, seeking positive solutions that benefit all parties involved.

This Document:

- Defines the roles and obligations of individuals within our organisation
- Applies to everyone associated with Dorset Pathways, including staff, stakeholders, volunteers, and contractors
- Supports our organizational goals
- Draws from current legal standards, government directives, and best practices. The references are provided at the end of this policy
- Includes relevant contact information at the conclusion of the policy

Obligations and Assurances

Dorset Pathways is committed to ensuring that individuals have an accessible and effective channel to express their feedback and feel empowered and supported when raising concerns.

We wholeheartedly encourage comments and complaints related to various aspects of our services, including provisions, policies, practices, accessibility, and individual experiences.



Roles and Responsibilities

Directors at Dorset Pathways bear the responsibility of conducting thorough and impartial investigations into complaints. They handle these matters consistently, impartially, and with empathy, adhering to well-defined timelines. The Directors oversee the documentation and tracking of complaints, utilizing this data to enhance our services.

The Directors regularly review complaint volumes, investigation outcomes, and necessary actions.

The Oversight Committee is entrusted with the responsibility of scrutinizing this data and the complaints log. Directors are open to engaging in discussions regarding necessary changes and advancements, as deemed suitable.

In the interest of transparency, statistical data on complaints will be made publicly accessible on our website.

All staff members will receive comprehensive guidance on receiving comments and providing direct feedback in response to informal complaints, as appropriate. Clear guidelines will be provided on instances where a complaint should be escalated to the Director for consideration. Staff will also be well-informed about the complaint-handling process.

Our Protocol

Dorset Pathways is dedicated to addressing the majority of concerns raised in a prompt and satisfactory manner. We aim to find resolutions through actions such as issuing an apology, implementing necessary adjustments or enhancements, or providing a reasonable explanation to the individual.

We approach complaints with careful listening and strive to maintain confidentiality when possible. We treat complaints with seriousness from the outset, aiming to prevent their escalation into formal grievances.

Upon receipt, formal written complaints will be acknowledged within five business days. If further investigation is required, responses will be provided by the Director within 28



business days. All complaints should be formally submitted via email to office@dorsetpathways.co.uk. If necessary, the matter can be escalated to The Chair of the Oversight Committee at chair@dorsetpathways.co.uk. We will ensure the complainant is kept informed about the progress and outcome of the investigation, including any updates related to policies, practices, educational services, or individual experiences, as necessary for preventing future occurrences.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the Director's response, they have the option to request a review by an Independent Complaints Panel. To invoke this option, the complainant must formally request it within 10 days of receiving the Director's response. Dorset Pathways will acknowledge this request within 5 business days and will strive to arrange the Complaints Panel hearing as promptly as possible, generally within twenty days of receiving the written notice. This timeframe may vary based on Panel members' availability.

The Complaints Panel will consist of a senior staff member not previously involved in the matter, a representative from the Oversight Committee, and an independent individual not affiliated with Dorset Pathways management.

Attendees of the hearing, including the complainant and/or their representative, the Director of Dorset Pathways and/or their representative, and any other relevant party deemed beneficial by the Complaints Panel, may present written statements and address the Panel. Legal representation is generally not appropriate.

If necessary, the Complaints Panel may request additional details about the complaint or related matters prior to the hearing. All involved parties will have the opportunity to provide written evidence, including supporting documents, timelines, and detailed explanations of the complaint. The Panel will consider this evidence alongside the initial information provided. The appeal proceedings will be conducted in an informal manner to allow effective case presentation. If feasible, the Panel will strive to reach a resolution without further investigation. If an investigation is deemed necessary, the Panel will determine its course.

After thorough consideration of all relevant facts, the Panel will make a decision and, if appropriate, offer recommendations within ten business days of the hearing. The decision made by the Complaints Panel is final. If the decision has financial implications for Dorset Pathways, approval from the Directors is required to ensure alignment with the Panel's



decision. Dorset Pathways will maintain comprehensive records of panel hearing minutes, decisions, and recommendations for a period of one year from the resolution date.

Summary of Procedure

Stage One - Informal Resolution

Issue or complaint raised verbally with staff

Is the issue resolved?

NO > Issue or complaint unresolved, proceed to stage two

YES > No further action

Stage Two - Formal Resolution

Issue or complaint raised in writing to the Director

Is the issue resolved?

NO > Issue or complaint unresolved, proceed to stage three

YES > No further action

Stage Three – Panel Hearing

Issue or complaint referred to Independent Complaints Panel

NO > Decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final

YES > No further action

Data Protection

Dorset Pathways will accurately record, securely store, and manage all complaints in accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).



We will securely hold personal data provided by individuals making complaints and will only use it to address the raised issue.

The identity of the complainant will only be shared with those who need to address the complaint and will not be disclosed to others or made public by Dorset Pathways. However, confidentiality may not be possible in certain circumstances, such as when relevant laws apply or allegations involve the actions of third parties.

We will adhere to the Data Protection Act and securely dispose of our complaint records one year after the resolution of the complaint.

Complaints Record

Formal complaints received in the previous academic year: None

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

The effectiveness of the complaints procedure and policy can be gauged both on a day-to-day basis and from a strategic perspective.

Ongoing monitoring/evaluation

Feedback from children and young people, assessing their level of satisfaction

Feedback from fellow professionals and parents/guardians, evaluating their satisfaction with their children or young people's experiences

Feedback from staff during supervision, training sessions, appraisals, and questionnaires

Recording of Complaints

Strategic monitoring/evaluation:

Formal review of Complaints reported to the Directors through the Oversight Committee.



Contact details

Dorset Pathways Director

Rob Halfhide rob.halfhide@dorsetpathways.co.uk

Office office@dorsetpathways.co.uk

Oversight Committee Chair chair@dorsetpathways.co.uk

Referenced documents and links

[The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#)

Authored by Directors

Last Reviewed : August 2023

Next Review : August 2024