



Complaints Policy

Complaints Policy	
Document Created	July 2018
Date Ratified	August 2018
Ratified By	Board of Trustees
Review Date	August 2021

1. Purpose and scope

This policy and procedure is designed to ensure that when anyone has a complaint or is dissatisfied with any aspect of Natural Ability's services, they will feel confident that the complaint will be taken seriously and dealt with efficiently.

Natura Ability will monitor complaints to ensure that the organisation learns from them and use the information to improve both the way the organisation works and the services provided.

2. Policy Application

This policy applies to all children and adults who use Natural Ability's services, their families and supporters, prospective service users, referring agencies and stakeholders.

Those who have not been accepted onto a service have the right to appeal against that decision and, if they so wish, apply the complaints procedure.

3. Principles

Natural Ability aims to:

- Ensure that all children and adults who use Natural Ability's services are aware of the complaints policy and procedure.
- Ensure that children and vulnerable people are supported to make complaints in ways that are appropriate for them, using means of communication that enable their voice to be heard.
- Enable children to complain in their own right.
- Ensure that an individual making a complaint is taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.
- Support children and vulnerable adults in the use of the complaints procedure, either directly, by allocating a member of staff to support them or by arranging an independent advocate for them.
- Deal with complaints swiftly and efficiently.
- Resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the person making the complaint at an early stage.
- Safeguard the rights of people using Natural Ability's services and staff in the process.
- Ensure that the complaints process is seen as an opportunity to deal with a problem, to resolve it, and to improve the service.
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with sensitively and in complete confidence.
- Adhere to the timetable for the complaints process as detailed in the procedure.
- Ensure that staff are appropriately trained to deal professionally with complaints.

Children and people with learning disabilities and other vulnerabilities can find it difficult to make complaints about services which they may feel could be removed at any time or for which they have had to fight to obtain. Natural Ability will always ensure that as an organisation it is seen to listen and clearly demonstrate that it takes service users' views and concerns seriously and that this will not affect their entitlement to services. This policy is an important element in showing this commitment to users of Natural Ability's services.

Complaints should be dealt with at the earliest opportunity. In most cases complaints should be resolved before they reach the stage of formal procedure. When this is not possible, it is important that procedures are accessible and fair. Natural Ability's procedure aims to ensure that a considerate, objective and sensitive approach is used and that the rights of both service user and staff are safeguarded.

Children, vulnerable adults, their families, those who support them and all professionals working with them must be able to access Natural Ability's complaints processes easily.

Complaints should not be seen as presenting a problem but as a useful source of feedback on how well Natural Ability is doing and what it needs to improve as an organisation.

4. Procedure

Stage one

Complaint to staff member, service manager, the CEO or a member of the Board.

It is in everyone's interests that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and Natural Ability can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, if staff are made aware of the procedures, they will know what to do when they receive a complaint. In the first instance the complaint should be discussed between the person making the complaint and the member of staff involved. The member of staff should be accompanied by another member of staff at the meeting and the complainant may want to bring along a friend, family member or advocate to support them. If a complainant indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with that particular member of staff, they should be referred to another staff member. If the complainant feels uncomfortable meeting face to face with staff, then they will be asked to put their complaint in writing.

Where the complaint concerns the service manager, the CEO or a Board member, the complaint should be referred to the Chair of the Board. Similarly, if a member of staff,

manager or Board member feels too compromised to deal with a complaint it should be referred to another member of staff, manager or Board Member.

The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial. It is also important to give an indication of timescale if it is found that the complaint requires further investigation. If a complainant first approaches a Board member, the complainant should be referred to the appropriate person i.e. the member of staff concerned or the Chair of the Board. Board members should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a complaints committee at a later stage of the procedure. It is hoped that the majority of complaints can be resolved at this stage.

Stage Two

Formal consideration of complaint.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled at Stage One and wishes to pursue their initial complaint, the service manager, the CEO or the Chair of the Board may delegate the task of investigating the complaint to another staff member or another Board member. The person making the complaint should be informed that an investigation is underway and that they will receive a response within 25 working days, or a letter explaining the reason for any subsequent delay. Once the relevant facts have been established the person investigating the complaint should relay the decision, and the reasons for the decision, in writing to the complainant.

Stage Three

Complaint taken to the Chair of Board.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome they should write to the service manager, the CEO or the Chair of the Board giving details of the complaint within 10 working days of the receipt of the decision letter. The Chair or another nominated Board member will convene a complaints committee consisting of Board members, if they consider it appropriate after considering the report of the investigating officer. The committee will consist of a minimum of three Board members. The committee will be appointed by the Chair of the Board with the chair of the committee being appointed when they meet. The complaints committee will decide if any action should be taken in response to the complaint. For example, it may choose to:

- convene a hearing at which the complainant will be invited to put forward their case. This should be held within 20 working days of the decision to hold a hearing.
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part.

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.

The committee may also recommend changes to Natural Ability's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

Record of Complaints

Natural Ability will keep a record of all complaints received which will be stored securely

Procedure Flow Chart

