

## **Abbeyfield Wales Society Ltd.**

### **Complaints Policy**

Abbeyfield Wales Society Ltd. is committed to dealing fairly, openly, honestly and effectively with concerns or complaints that residents or the general public raise about our services. If we make mistakes, we will acknowledge this, apologise and, where possible, put things right. We are committed to learning from our mistakes and improving services and service delivery.

#### **When to use this policy**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the services we offer or a resolution where we offer to put things right it can also relate to an action or lack of action taken by Abbeyfield Wales Ltd, or anyone working on our behalf.

This policy does not cover complaints made to Abbeyfield Wales Society Ltd about the behaviour of other residents unless we have not dealt with issues already brought to our attention. These are covered by our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

#### **Service Failures – Service Recovery.**

Where possible, we want to deal with things straight away. For most service failures (promises that may not have been kept) we will try to resolve them as quickly as possible. We will initiate service recovery to minimise disruptions for our residents and/or the general public. We will record these incidents and where appropriate, learn any lessons. If we can't help, we will explain why and if necessary, deal with it formally.

#### **How to express concern or complain**

Anyone can contact us in the following ways:

- Phone: 01633 244185
- E-mail: [complaints@abbeyfieldsw.co.uk](mailto:complaints@abbeyfieldsw.co.uk)
- In writing: Pagefield House, 24 Gold Tops, Casnewydd / Newport, NP20 4PG
- Speak to any Abbeyfield Wales Society Ltd employee

Copies of this policy are available from our staff or our offices.

## **Investigating complaints**

Where we have been unable to resolve a service failure informally or the matter is of a serious nature, it will be dealt with under our formal complaints process. During an investigation we will look at files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails and any other relevant information. In most cases we will talk to the people involved, look at our policies and where appropriate any legal guidance. We will always try to discuss complaints in person in the early stages and confirm our findings in writing in the later stages.

### **Stage 0 – Staff aim to resolve the complaint at the front line.**

We will always try and resolve the complaint as quickly as possible. Wherever we can we will use our front line staff teams to resolve a complaint if at all possible. We will not necessarily treat this as a formal complaint at this stage unless resolution cannot be reached. Where resolution cannot be reached, staff will be advised to inform the complainant to make a formal complaint using the complaints process. The complainant can either do this themselves directly by contacting the Society or they can ask a staff member to assist them in making the complaint.

### **Stage 1 – The formal complaints process ensuring that the facts of the case are established.**

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome or handling of their informal complaint, they may ask for their complaint to be dealt with at the next stage.

Where this happens we will appoint an investigating manager (usually the head of a service) to investigate the complaint. We will acknowledge that the complaint has been escalated within **5 working days**, undertake and complete any further investigations and aim to respond in writing with our findings within a further **10 working days**.

### **Stage 2 – The Appeal Process.**

Where a customer is dissatisfied with the outcome or handling of their Stage 1 complaint, they may ask for their complaint to be reviewed and appeal against any decision made as a consequence of the complaint investigation.

We will acknowledge this within **2 working days** and aim to respond with a date for the complaint review hearing within a further **28 working days**.

At Stage 2, complainants will be invited to present their complaint and can be accompanied (subject to conditions) to a panel made up of Board Members and at least one member of the Executive Management Team. The panel will review the complaint made, consider the outcome of investigations and any resolutions that have been offered. The Panel will decide whether to uphold the complaint, uphold the decision or, if appropriate, suggest a suitable alternative resolution.

## Outcome

We will aim to provide clear information to complainants when we have completed our investigations:

- If we get something wrong, we will always apologise and explain why.
- If we find there is a fault in the way we do things, we will explain how we will change things to stop it happening again.
- If we failed to provide a service that we should have, we will provide or reinstate it as quickly as we possibly can.
- If we did not meet a high enough standard we will aim to put that right.
- If a complainant loses out as a result of our mistake we will try to put them in the position they would have been in if we had got it right first time or alternatively agree on a mutually acceptable way forward.
- If we need more time to complete our investigations and respond thoroughly, we will let you know as soon as possible and explain why and provide a revised deadline.

## Ombudsman

If we are not able to resolve a complaint, complainants may refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent and can look into complaints where a complainant believes that they:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it; &/or they
- Have been disadvantaged personally or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact them by:

- Phone: 0845 601 0987
- E-mail: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)
- Their website: [www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)
- In writing: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

## Monitoring our performance

We will monitor the number of complaints we receive, how many we resolve and patterns or serious issues we identify through our complaints process. We will report on our performance to our Board.

## **Learning lessons**

We take service failures and complaints very seriously and learn from any mistakes we make.

Where there is a need for change, we develop learning objectives setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

## **Vexatious complainants**

In a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource issues for the Association.

We define unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants as those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the Society, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints. The description 'unreasonably persistent' and 'vexatious' may apply separately or jointly to a particular complainant.

Abbeyfield Wales Society Ltd. will treat as abusive, any behaviour that seeks to harass, verbally abuse or otherwise intimidate our officers. This can include the use of foul or inappropriate language or the use of offensive and racist/sexist or other inappropriate language.

## **What if I need help?**

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact Citizens Advice, Shelter Cymru, or any agencies that can help or support you.

If you require this policy in another language or format such as audio, large print, please let us know.

## Complaints Policy Process Map:

### **Stage 0:**

Front Line staff will try and resolve your complaint to your satisfaction. If you remain dissatisfied you should move to Stage 1

### **Stage 1 – Formal Complaint:**

You can complain directly to head office or ask a staff member to make your complaint formal on your behalf or you can call Head office on 01633 244185 or email [complaints@abbeyfieldsw.co.uk](mailto:complaints@abbeyfieldsw.co.uk)

### **Stage 1 – Investigation:**

A Manager will be appointed to investigate your complaint. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days and the investigation undertaken within a further 10 working days and you will receive a response in writing.

**If you are dissatisfied with the reply you can move to stage two - Appeal**

### **Stage 2 – Appeal:**

If you make an appeal you will be invited to make your case to a panel comprising of a Senior Manager and up to two Trustees. Your appeal will be acknowledged within 2 working days and a date set for the hearing within 28 days.

**If you remain dissatisfied after this process you have the right to appeal to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Details are contained in our complaints policy.**