

Complaints and compliments Policy

Policy Approval and Review History:

First approved by	Guy Stevenson, CEO
First approved date	01/02/2022
Next review date (every 2 years)	01/02/2027
Latest review signed off by	
Latest review date	

Policy Change History:

Version	Date	Author	Description of change
1.0	Feb 2022	Guy Stevenson	Document creation
2.0	Feb 2025	Guy Stevenson	Document Review

Please note: This procedure/policy may be subject to change where trustees or senior managers of the charity identify reasons underpinning the need for it

1. Purpose and introduction

- 1.1. The principal purpose of this policy is to set out the charity's commitment to ensure compliance with legislation underpinning its information management as well as an objective mechanism to addresses deficiencies in its performance and delivery of services.
- 1.2. Balance CIO recognises that providing a high standard of service delivery is essential. We welcome feedback those using our services, whether it be positive or to tell us where we haven't met expectations.
- 1.3. The proper handling of complaints is therefore one of Balance CIO's highest priorities. Staff members are trained to perceive complaints as a valuable source of information about services and processes and that handled in the correct manner can assist in continuous improvement.
- 1.4. To ensure that this policy meets the support needs across the charity's diverse range of customers, it has been written in consideration of the Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary And Health Service Ombudsman, 2008)
- 1.5. Complaints and the complaints process are managed by departmental managers in the first instance but ultimately overseen by the CEO.

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1. Aims

- 2.1.1. To deliver a complaints service that meets Balance CIO's service standards
- 2.1.2. To facilitate organisational learning from complaints.

2.2. Objectives

- 2.2.1. To work collaboratively internally, with partner organisations and other agencies where necessary to coordinate comprehensive outcomes to complaints.
- 2.2.2. To facilitate the effective and early resolution of complaints.
- 2.2.3. To use the analysis of complaints to help improve services and reduce the level of complaints.
- 2.2.4. To manage all complaints in an open and accountable way.

3. Compliments

- 3.1. We value and encourage all kinds of feedback. Anyone who has a relationship with Balance CIO can complement a member of staff, a team or the organisation. Compliments are passed on to staff and their line manager and are used to identify areas of good practice that the charity can learn from and further develop.
- 3.2. Compliments can be submitted verbally to any member of staff who will record and share this or can be submitted through the charity's website, via email to info@balancesupport.org.uk or in writing to any one of the Balance offices.

3.3. Compliments are used to enable service development and as part of individual performance development. Employees receiving compliments will be recognised appropriately as part of the charity's reward and recognition activity.

4. Complaint's procedure

4.1. Complaints can arise from a number of issues including:

- 4.1.1. A failure to comply with policy, procedure or standards of service delivery
- 4.1.2. A decision which the complainant believes is not fair or clear to them
- 4.1.3. The behaviour of the charity's staff, volunteers, associates, or contractors

4.2. Balance CIO operates a complaints process with up to two stages:

- 4.2.1. **Stage 1:** Internal investigation of a complaint. A full written response will be provided to the complainant within 10 working days. If the complaint remains unresolved at Stage 1, it will move to Stage 2.
- 4.2.2. **Stage 2:** Appeal. Review of Stage 1 decision in response to an appeal made with specific grounds. A full written response will be provided to the complainant within 10 working days

4.3. A complaint can be made in a number of ways to Balance CIO:

- 4.3.1. In writing via letter or email
- 4.3.2. Through the charity website
- 4.3.3. By telephone: 020 3740 2315
- 4.3.4. In person to any member of staff at any one of our operational sites
- 4.3.5. To our trustees via the corporate services team, if you are dissatisfied with the initial outcome of your complaint response.

4.4. Complaints should be made providing the details:

- 4.4.1. The complainant's name and contact details, unless they are unwilling to provide these.
- 4.4.2. The nature of their concern and anything that they wished see as an outcome.
- 4.4.3. The circumstances surrounding the complaint, including when, where any action that was taken and the details of others who were present/involved.

4.5. Balance Support CIO strives to ensure its approach to managing complaints management is thorough and responsive. We will meet our obligations by maintaining the following actions:

- 4.5.1. That we ensure that everyone in receipt of its services knows how to complain, and where they can make their complaint.
- 4.5.2. Makes personal contact with the complainant(s), to understand their complaint, attempt resolution as a first course of action and update them of the outcome following any actions agreed as part of the discussion.

- 4.5.3. Acknowledges all complaints in writing within 2 working days.
 - 4.5.4. Responds to **stage 1** complaints within 10 working days following receipt of the complaint.
 - 4.5.5. Review and respond to **stage 2** complaints within 10 working days following receipt of the escalation request.
 - 4.5.6. Supports those with additional needs through the complaints process and, where appropriate, refer them to alternative services that may be able to assist them in making their complaint independently of the charity.
 - 4.5.7. Provide alternative avenues to seek support when the complaint is related to services outside the charity's remit. Particularly where these align with our obligations under health and safety, safeguarding and/or other contractual obligations to our operations and support.
 - 4.5.8. That all complaints will be logged in a central register and overseen by Corporate Service Team in addition to the lead manager responsible for resolving the complaint.
 - 4.5.9. That where there is a requirement to escalate a complaint to our board of trustees, or other relevant external authority we will do so.
- 4.6. Should timescales set out above are not practically possible, we will give reasons and agree new timescales with the complainant.
- 4.7. Balance CIO respects the rights of everyone subject to or in receipt of its services to complain to these statutory bodies and will work openly with partner agencies to resolve any legitimate concerns that customers raise.

5. External Complaints Resolution Bodies

- 5.1. On the rare occasions when the charity is unable to conclude its complaints process to the satisfaction of the complainant, they will be advised of their right to approach a designated person such as an MP, Councillor or a recognised resolution body.
- 5.2. Complainants making complaints relating to services commissioned by the Local or Health Authorities retain their right to complain to these bodies directly at any stage.

6. Persistent and Vexatious Complaints

- 6.1. If a complainant has made unreasonable complaints in the past, we will not assume that their next complaint is unreasonable. Each case will be considered on its merits. All relevant correspondence will be evaluated to consider the circumstances, including:
 - 6.1.1. whether a complainant has made persistent or unreasonable demands

- 6.1.2. whether there is a strong likelihood that complaints are being made to intentionally cause harassment, divert resources or to disrupt the proper workings of Balance CIO
- 6.1.3. whether the complainant or their representative has been abusive or threatening to staff or has produced excessive correspondence
- 6.1.4. whether the complainant displays vexatious behaviour

7. Confidentiality

- 7.1. Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Human Rights Act 1998, all personal and sensitive organisational information, however received, is treated as confidential, including:
 - 7.1.1. anything of a personal nature that is not a matter of public record about a customer, member of staff, volunteer or trustee
 - 7.1.2. sensitive organisational information.
- 7.2. We will ensure that the members of staff managing the complaint only involve other agencies and share information with the consent of the individual concerned, unless:
 - 7.2.1. Balance Support CIO is required to share information required its legal and regulated governance obligations
 - 7.2.2. The information is necessary to ensure compliance with its safeguarding of vulnerable adults or children.

8. Monitoring and Reporting

- 8.1. Complaints and compliments will be monitored by Balance CIO Senior Management Team and the findings will be regularly shared with our Board of Trustees and delegated subcommittees as part of a documented cycle of reporting.
- 8.2. Significant exceptions will be reported immediately including any mitigating actions or considerations requiring approval as part of governance and oversight responsibilities.
- 8.3. In line with best practice recommended by the Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, 2008) the charity seeks continuous improvement through using feedback and lessons learnt from complaints to improve service design and delivery.

Appendix 1

Legislation, Regulation and Guidance

Government legislation has an impact on how Balance CIO can implement its Complaints and Compliments Policy. Listed below are the key regulatory standards and statutory Acts that have been acknowledged.

The Care Act

Mental Health Capacity Act 2005

Equality Act 2010

Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, 2008)