



OPS007

Feedback Policy and Procedure

Version 2.0

Named person responsible for policy:

Paul Morrish, Deputy Chief Executive.

Phone: 01223 555800

Email: paul.morrish@voiceability.org

Record of Changes:

Version	Date of Change	Change by	Brief Description
2.0	17.9.13	PM	Version 2 Issued

Contents

Policy Statement	3
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Scope of Policy.....	3
3. VoiceAbility’s Feedback Policy	4
4. VoiceAbility’s Feedback Procedure	5
Responding to Compliments and Comments:.....	6
5. VoiceAbility’s Complaints Procedure	6
Our Approach to Dealing with Complaints	6
Receiving a Complaint:	7
Investigating a Complaint.....	8
Complaints received about members of VoiceAbility staff:.....	10
6. VoiceAbility’s Appeals Procedure.....	10
7. Time Limit for making a Complaint	12
8. Record Management and Data Protection.....	13
9. Evaluation, Monitoring and Improvement	13
Appendix One – What is Feedback.....	14
Compliments:	14
Comments:.....	15
Complaints:	15
Service Satisfaction – Surveys and Feedback Forms:.....	16
Appendix Two - Complaint Flowchart	17

Policy Statement

VoiceAbility is committed to delivering professional, effective and high quality services to everyone we work with.

Feedback from those we work with, on our services and on the performance of our staff, is essential in helping us to improve both what we do, and how we do it.

We therefore encourage and will record and learn from all types of feedback from people who use our services and all other relevant stakeholders, be it a complaint, a comment or a compliment.

Where people do have a complaint about our work, we will respond to and deal with the issues raised swiftly, thoroughly and fairly.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out our commitment to gathering, recording and learning from the feedback we receive and the expectation we have of all staff in helping us realise that commitment. It also explains how we promise to deal with complaints that people have about the work we do, and the services we provide.

2. Scope of Policy

- 2.1 This Policy and Procedure applies to all workers and volunteers within VoiceAbility. It covers all feedback received by VoiceAbility about any subject and in any form. Feedback can be given by anyone that has used VoiceAbility services or who is affected by the organisation and its decisions. It also applies to people who have been refused a service by VoiceAbility.
- 2.2 This policy and procedure does not apply to workers and volunteers at VoiceAbility wishing to make comments about the organisation or their own working arrangements. These should be raised through as a staff suggestion (staffvoice@voiceability.org), through the CEO's Open Phone, through normal management and communication processes, or the grievance procedure, as appropriate.

- 2.3 Allegations of abuse by individual workers or volunteers at VoiceAbility or by the organisation will be responded to under our relevant safeguarding policies (OPS001 - Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Harm, and OPS002 - Safeguarding Children & Young People) as the first priority. This does not necessarily preclude action under this policy.

3. VoiceAbility's Feedback Policy

- 3.1 We want anyone to be able to feedback to VoiceAbility in any way, and at any time and to know that we will take notice of their views and concerns and respond appropriately.
- 3.2 We will consistently record all feedback, defining it within one of the following three categories – Compliments, Comments and Complaints - so we can learn from the views of those we work with. The ways in which VoiceAbility defines feedback is set out in Appendix One to this document.
- 3.3 We maintain an up-to-date central register on MAAVIS to record all categories of feedback and will set annual targets for the receipt of feedback through our casework.
- 3.4 We will always explain our Feedback Policy when commencing work with any person using our services for the first time and to other stakeholders.
- 3.5 When there is a suggestion or declaration of criticism or concern, the person receiving the feedback should always explore with the person how they wish their feedback to be treated and their concerns resolved. This should include ensuring that they are aware that they can make a complaint.
- 3.6 We are committed to investigating and responding to formal complaints thoroughly and fairly, and the process for doing so is set out in Section 5.
- 3.7 All workers, volunteers, managers, executives and Trustees are responsible for logging and managing feedback, and we expect every worker within VoiceAbility to be aware of the opportunities to encourage and capture feedback, and to do so, whatever their role or position within the organisation.
- 3.8 The information we provide explaining how to feedback will be widely and easily accessible, in both hard copy and on-line.

- 3.9 On request, and wherever needed and practicable, we will provide information on how to give feedback in other community languages, on audiotape/disc and in Braille.
- 3.10 We will report on the feedback we receive and ensure that we applaud individuals and teams when praised, and act on suggestions for improvement and on complaints. We will provide regular reports to the Board of Trustees on feedback received, including, but not limited to an annual Feedback Report which will detail the volume and nature of feedback we have received, trends and issues, the action we have taken and plan to take, and the learning derived from this.
- 3.11 We are committed to continually reviewing and improving the way in which we handle, resolve, learn from and improve our management of feedback.

4. VoiceAbility's Feedback Procedure

- 4.1 All workers and volunteers are encouraged to seek feedback from the people they are working with, or other stakeholders they meet or engage with in the normal course of their work.
- 4.2 Feedback can be provided to us via any colleague within the organisation and through any of the following routes:
- a) Orally through telephone calls, during or after meetings (including web based meetings), at events or any ad hoc conversations with any stakeholders including people we work with
 - b) In writing through emails, letters, texts, web chat, Facebook, Twitter, cards, completed feedback form or leaflet
 - c) Surveys including telephone interviews and completed questionnaires
 - d) Other meetings with stakeholders including focus groups, councils, consultations, commissioners, tender interviews, networking, partnership working
 - e) Evaluations of VoiceAbility events, the website or publications.
- 4.3 General contact details for feeding back to us include:

- a) Our local VoiceAbility services (visit: http://www.voiceability.org/contact_us/ for details)
- b) Our Helpline Team on 0300 330 5454
- c) Our feedback email address: feedback@voiceability.org
- d) Our website http://www.voiceability.org/about_us/help_us_improve

4.4 The process for recording compliments and comments on MAAVIS can be found on VoiceAbility World.

Responding to Compliments and Comments:

- 4.5 All compliments help us understand what we are doing well, as well as how we can improve further. A compliment must be recorded centrally and shared with the service/or member of staff it relates to.
- 4.6 All comments will be taken seriously, as they also help us to reflect on what we do, and how we might develop and improve our services further. All comments must be recorded centrally and the relevant Manager will be notified to enable them to take any action if necessary.
- 4.7 When we review our Policies, we take into consideration any comments made about a Policy.

5. VoiceAbility's Complaints Procedure

PLEASE NOTE: If at any point in handling a complaint abuse is suspected, workers or volunteers must immediately follow VoiceAbility's safeguarding policies (OPS 001 - Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Harm or OPS 002 - Safeguarding children & Young People at Risk of Harm).

Our Approach to Dealing with Complaints

- 5.1 When people complain to VoiceAbility our aim is to:
 - a) Clearly understand the person's concerns and issues they are raising
 - b) Clearly understand the resolution sought

- c) Address the concerns by understanding the facts of the situation and identify a resolution as quickly as possible and as close to the root of the problem as possible.
 - d) Resolve issues informally wherever the complainant wishes us to and wherever appropriate so that people who have concerns do not have to go through a formal process.
- 5.2 Complaints will be investigated objectively, fairly and thoroughly in a positive problem-solving manner and in line with our complaints timetable. Staff will be encouraged to follow best practice in complaints handling as championed by the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman. For further information, please see the PHSO's Principles of Good Complaint Handling - http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1040/0188-Principles-of-Good-Complaint-Handling-bookletweb.pdf
- 5.3 No service will be delayed, suspended or withdrawn because a complaint has been made using VoiceAbility's procedures.
- 5.4 For people requiring assistance in order to make a complaint they will be offered help to explain their concerns and issues and the resolution they are seeking. This will then be documented and taken through the normal procedure. Help may be provided by advocates within the team currently supporting them, by VoiceAbility advocates from another team, or (at the discretion of the manager) with support from advocates from another advocacy provider.
- 5.5 All workers and volunteers will receive appropriate instruction and/or training to address and resolve difficulties locally, if they arise, and Managers will receive training in investigating complaints objectively and fairly.
- 5.6 VoiceAbility does reserve the right to suspend or cease the investigation of a complaint if legal proceedings are commenced by the complainant against the organisation.

Receiving a Complaint:

- 5.7 Complaints can be received (or handled) by any member of staff (referred to as the **Complaint Handler**) but should be dealt with by a Manager.

- 5.8 In the event that a VoiceAbility worker or volunteer receives a complaint orally (in person, or over the phone), they should courteously and as quickly as possible explain that they will take all necessary details but then refer the matter directly and immediately to the appropriate Manager (referred to as the **Complaint Manager**). The appropriate Manager will usually be the manager of the service about which the complaint has been made, or the manager of the worker or volunteer about whom the complaint has been made. Contact details and communication needs of the caller should be ascertained. **This should usually take place within 1 working day and no more than 2 working days.**
- 5.9 Emailed and written complaints should be passed directly to the appropriate Manager but the person handling the complaint should respond to the complainant immediately explaining that the complaint has been received, and that it has been passed on to a Manager (whose name and contact details should be provided).
- 5.10 Where the appropriate manager is unavailable (due to leave or sickness), the complaint should be passed to another manager operating at the same level as the appropriate manager, who will take responsibility for that complaint until either the appropriate manager returns and/or a senior manager determines otherwise. The decision as to who should act as Complaint Manager rests with the appropriate manager's line manager.
- 5.11 Where a complaint is received about a Manager, it should be dealt with by that Manager's Manager and forwarded accordingly.

Acknowledging the Complaint

- 5.12 **A letter acknowledging the complaint should always be sent within 2 working days** setting out at a minimum the usual timescale within which we aim to resolve complaints and the name of the person investigating the complaint.

Investigating a Complaint

- 5.13 The Complaint Manager should always contact the complainant for further information and evidence and to seek clarification about the issues and resolution being sought. **This should usually take place within 1 working**

day and no more than 2 working days. It will also help establish whether, and to what extent, the issue can be resolved informally without a fuller, more time-consuming and costly investigation. Where appropriate we will discuss with the complainant any support required to use the complaints process, which might, in some instances, include advocacy support.

- 5.14 The Complaint Manager should thank the Complainant for their complaint and reassure them of our intention to listen carefully and objectively to their concern. The Complaint Manager should make careful notes, and take any evidence that the complainant has offered into account, checking at every stage that the complainant is happy with our understanding of the issues. The Complaint Manager should investigate other sources of data (statements from staff and from other professionals as necessary, correspondence and notes, and work on MAAVIS).
- 5.15 The Complaint Manager should produce a clear record of the investigation, detailing clearly the Complainant's issues, the research undertaken, and what was found in the course of the investigation. The Complaint Manager should come to an impartial view on each issue and be confident that the evidence justifies the conclusion. If it doesn't the Complaint Manager should judge whether further investigatory work is required. This record should be written out as a letter to the Complainant, clearly and in a format that the Complainant can understand and follow.
- 5.16 Our aim is **to provide a Complaint Outcome Letter within 10 working days of receiving the formal complaint.** If, for any reason, we cannot do this, the Complaint Manager will let the complainant know when they can expect to receive a response. In any event we would endeavour to respond within a calendar month.
- 5.17 If we have upheld the complaint or any of the issues within the complaint, the Complaint Manager should acknowledge this, apologise, and advise the Complainant on how we will put things right, by explaining what actions we plan to take as a result of the complaint.

- 5.18 If the Complaint Manager believes the concerns to be unfounded, she or he will also explain their response clearly, providing the Complainant with the option to appeal the outcome of the complaints investigation.
- 5.19 The Complaint Manager will ensure an accurate record of the Complaint Outcome is stored on MAAVIS and where there is evident learning from the complaint will discuss this with their manager and the Head of Quality.
- 5.20 For further guidance on good complaint handling, please visit:
- <http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/listening-and-learning-2012/getting-it-right/good-practice-in-complaint-handling>
 - <http://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com/1849-2157/Handling-complaints.html>

Complaints received about members of VoiceAbility staff:

- 5.21 If a complaint is received about a member of VoiceAbility staff, or the investigation of a complaint reveals concerns about a member of VoiceAbility staff, the person receiving/investigating the complaint should notify the employee's line manager who will, where appropriate, consider whether or not action is required, including action under the Disciplinary Procedures (HR 026) or Capability Procedures (HR 027).
- 5.22 The person who raised the complaint will be advised that the matter will be taken forward by the employee's manager.
- 5.23 The complainant is not entitled to know whether any disciplinary or capability action is taken or the outcome of it.

6. VoiceAbility's Appeals Procedure

- 6.1 All Complaint Outcome Letters must inform the Complainant:
- a) Of their right to appeal the outcome of their complaint should they be dissatisfied;
 - b) To whom they should address that appeal; and
 - c) That they **have up to 10 working days in which to submit an appeal**, which should include the grounds and evidence for the appeal.

- 6.2 An **Appeals Officer**, who will usually be senior to the person who undertook the original complaint investigation and who will be identified by either a Regional Director (or in her/his absence, by the National Services Director), will consider the appeal.
- 6.3 Details of the Appeals process and the Appeals Officer will be communicated to the complainant, in writing, **within 5 working days** of their appeal being received.
- 6.4 The Complainant may be offered a meeting as a part of the consideration of the appeal.
- 6.5 Outcomes following the appeal might include:
- a) The initial complaint response is upheld.
 - b) The initial complaint response is overruled and new findings or decisions are reached or new recommendations are made.
 - c) The complaint is re-investigated and the original findings, decisions and recommendations are affirmed or replaced by new or different ones.
- 6.6 The Appeals Officer will **aim to provide a full response in an Appeal Outcome Letter as soon as practicable and in any case within 20 working days of the date of the appeal being submitted**. The Appeals Officer will inform the complainant if this is not possible together with the expected date for conclusion.
- 6.7 The Appeals Officer's decision is final other than in exceptional cases detailed below.
- 6.8 In exceptional circumstances, and on receipt of a submission from the Complainant to the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Executive Officer may at his/her absolute discretion chose to refer the complaint to either an independent third party for review or to the Chair of the Board to appoint a member of the Board of Trustees to investigate.
- 6.9 VoiceAbility will consider the outcome and any recommendations from the review very carefully and provide a written response to these, but they will not be binding upon the organisation.

- 6.10 In deciding whether to refer a complaint for independent review, the Chief Executive Officer must take account of the potential merits and impact of the complaint.
- 6.11 In certain circumstances the Complainant may be able to complain about VoiceAbility to the Charity Commission. More information about the matters which the Charity Commission will consider is provided on their website www.charitycommission.gov.uk.
- 6.12 In many circumstances, including where the VoiceAbility service complained about is commissioned by a Local Authority or NHS organisation, the complainant can also complain to the Commissioner of that service. This will be explained to the Complainant in the response to their appeal, or at a prior stage where appropriate to any arrangements made with the Commissioners of that service.

7. Time Limit for making a Complaint

- 7.1 Our aim is to put things right as quickly as possible when we have caused concern, so we encourage people to make complaints as soon as issues arise. This allows VoiceAbility to investigate while the issues are fresh in people's minds and have the greatest chance of being addressed and resolved.
- 7.2 For making a formal complaint the time limit is normally six months from the date of the event which triggered the complaint.
- 7.3 The time limit may be extended, at the absolute discretion of VoiceAbility.
- 7.4 The decision on extending the time limit will be made considering factors including:
- a) Whether it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly;
 - b) Issues which may have made it difficult or impossible for the complaint to have been raised earlier; and/or
 - c) Any other relevant factors.

8. Record Management and Data Protection

- 8.1 All aspects of the Feedback Procedure meet the requirements of the legislation regarding Data Protection in line with our Data Protection Policy COR 005.
- 8.2 Any personal information obtained in relation to a complaint is only to be used for that purpose.
- 8.3 **Recording Complaints:** The person with responsibility for responding to a complaint is also responsible for recording all casework, correspondence, reports and evidence relating to that complaint. Details of the complaint should be recorded as carefully and as fully as possible as this enables us to monitor the number and type of complaints we receive and helps us to improve our services. **Only Managers are able to record and view complaints on MAAVIS.**
- 8.4 **PLEASE NOTE:** For the sake of clarity, the date on which the complainant confirms their intention to complain is Day 1 for the purposes of calculating subsequent complaints management timelines.

9. Evaluation, Monitoring and Improvement

- 9.1 We will use the information gathered from Compliments, Comments and Complaints - including from Service Satisfaction Surveys - to assist with improvements to our services. We will keep a central record on MAAVIS of all feedback received and ensure that full records are kept of the nature and treatment of every complaint. Particular attention will be paid to the lessons learnt, nature of complaints and trends, the timeliness of responses and resolutions.
- 9.2 Feedback will be taken into account as part of our services continuous improvement planning cycle. Our Head of Quality will report quarterly on all feedback to the Executive Management Team and annually to the Board of Trustees. All policy development will take into account relevant feedback received and an annual review of all feedback will be included in our reports to commissioners, as well as featuring on our website and our intranet site, VoiceAbility World.

- 9.3 We will ask anyone making a complaint whether they have been satisfied with the way we have handled their complaint and whether as an outcome to their complaint the service has improved for them.
- 9.4 The EMT lead on Feedback is the Deputy Chief Executive, and it is his or her responsibility to ensure the policy is adhered to, and that EMT regularly reviews the learning from the feedback we receive. Any complaints or suggestions about the policy, associated processes or their interpretation should be addressed to him or her.

Appendix One – What is Feedback

Feedback is any information provided to us about the services we provide, the work we do, or the way we do it. Feedback will come through a variety of routes including orally in meetings, in writing, through surveys, and in response to evaluations of various aspects of our organisation. However people choose to feedback to us we will recognise it as feedback in every instance and record it accordingly.

We categorise feedback as Compliments, Comments or Complaints. All are valuable to us, but we may deal with each form of feedback differently.

Compliments:

A compliment is an expression of praise. It is a positive statement about a service provided by or on behalf of VoiceAbility, for example, about the helpfulness, attitude or approach of a member of staff. This can also be about the accessibility and standards of our services, information, events or website.

Examples:

- I would like to thank the Advocate for the prompt and efficient way in which they answered the phone and dealt with my query. They were really helpful and friendly.
- I was so pleased that when I needed to see someone about the difficulties I was having, the project worker came to see me at my home.

Comments:

A comment is a general statement about policies, practices or a service as a whole. This may have an impact on everyone and not just one individual. A comment can be positive or negative in nature. Comments may question policies and practices, make suggestions for new services or for improving existing services.

Examples:

- I am very happy that VoiceAbility is involving people who use their services in the recruitment and selection of new staff
- I am pleased to see that VoiceAbility have a clear complaint policy
- I am unhappy with VoiceAbility's decision to introduce a waiting list for their advocacy service
- I couldn't find the information I wanted on the VoiceAbility Website.

Complaints:

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with VoiceAbility by a person using VoiceAbility's services or other stakeholder. Someone may at first raise their complaint informally or choose to follow VoiceAbility's formal Complaint Process set out in Section 5 and Appendix Two.

Examples:

- My Advocate doesn't return my phone calls for days; I am really fed up with this.
- Your services do not always appear to be accessible during the times you say they are.
- I have tried to request that improvements be made to the service I am receiving from VoiceAbility but nothing has happened.

On receipt of a complaint, or a comment that may constitute a complaint, we will in every case follow our Complaints Procedure set out in Section 5 and Appendix Two.

The procedure for recording complaints on MAAVIS can be found on VoiceAbility World.

Service Satisfaction – Surveys and Feedback Forms:

One of the ways VoiceAbility seeks feedback is by requesting and collecting information about people who use our services and other stakeholders' experience of and satisfaction with our services through satisfaction surveys and Feedback Forms.

Service Satisfaction Surveys are used to offer stakeholders the opportunity to express any feelings that they have about the services we provide.

Feedback Forms should be requested from all partners we work with at the close of a piece of work, or at the end of a project, or programme of activity. Feedback Forms should be accessible, and available in a range of formats.

Every effort should be made to encourage and support partners to complete Feedback Forms. Each service or project will have an agreed target for completion of Feedback Forms and teams must have plans in place to achieve those targets.

If an individual requires support to complete the survey or needs a more accessible form of survey, this should be responded to by the VoiceAbility worker who sent the original form.

Appendix Two - Complaint Flowchart

