

Complaints Policy

1 Purpose of this Policy

- 1.1 SUDEP Action is committed to providing a good service to its service users, other stakeholders and other people and organisations with whom it comes into contact.
- 1.2 The aim of this Policy is to give clear guidelines and understanding to all SUDEP Action staff, Trustees, volunteers, supporters and service users about the Charity's Complaints Policy.
- 1.3 This Policy is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently, in a timely manner and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.
- 1.4 In order to continue to improve the services of the Charity this Policy will identify means by which upheld complaints result in changes to practices or procedures.

2. Background

- 2.1 A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, with the services of the Charity, with a member of staff, volunteer or Trustee and that requires a formal response.
- 2.2 This is different from a grievance which relates to a complaint made by a member of staff and which are dealt with in accordance with the Charity's Grievance Policy.

3. Relevant Regulations and Procedures

- 3.1 *Complaints about Charities CC47. Charity Commission Guidance*
- 3.2 *Annex 1: Procedures for dealing with Complaints – Advice to Complainants*

4. General Policy

- 4.1 SUDEP Action aims to resolve complaints quickly, fairly and effectively. The Charity accepts that one of the ways it can improve its services is to listen and respond to the views of service users, partners and others who come into contact with the Charity. In particular, by responding positively to complaints and by putting mistakes right.

We aim to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy as possible.
- We treat any complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction which calls for a timely response.
- We deal with it promptly, politely and when appropriate confidentially.
- We will respond in the correct way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology or information on any action taken.

- We will learn from complaints and use them to improve services that we offer.

5. Responsibilities of SUDEP Action

In dealing with complaints the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive will:

- 5.1 Identify a member of the Senior Management Team to investigate the complaint.
- 5.2 Acknowledge the receipt of each formal complaint in writing within 7 working days of receipt.
- 5.3 Provide the complainant with a copy of this Complaints Policy.
- 5.4 Independently investigate any complaint made.
- 5.5 Provide a detailed, written response to the complainant within 21 working days of receipt of the complaint.
- 5.6 Take appropriate action based upon the findings of the investigation of the complaint.
- 5.7 Ensure that the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive has authorised both the detailed written response and any action identified under 5.5 and 5.6 above.
- 5.8 Maintain adequate records including a Complaints Register.

6. Complainants are required to:

- 6.1 Raise their concern promptly and directly with the person concerned and if the concern cannot be resolved informally then to follow this formal Complaints Procedure as detailed in Annex 1.
- 6.2 Explain the issue as clearly and as fully as possible.
- 6.3 Allow SUDEP Action a reasonable amount of time to investigate and report its findings.

7. Learning From Complaints

- 7.1 SUDEP Action acknowledges that any formal complaint, whether upheld or not, may identify issues which require remediation.

Examples may include:-

- The need for additional staff training either specific to an individual or to staff more widely.
- The need to change the Charity's Policies, procedures or practices.
- The need to amend the Charity's literature or website.

- 7.2 As part of the investigation of a complaint the staff member charged with undertaking it will document, in writing, any areas where lessons can be learnt. Recommendations will be made to the Board as to how these may be actioned, no later than two Board Meetings after the complaint has been resolved.

8. Complaints Relating to Vulnerable Adults and Children

- 8.1 Complaints received in respect of vulnerable adults or children will be dealt with in line with the guidelines of this Policy. However, in acknowledgement of the additional sensitivities which may pertain to these groups of persons, more stringent processes with regard to timeframes and responsibilities have been adopted.
- 8.2 These processes are detailed in the Charity's Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policies.

9. Updating this Policy

- 9.1 It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive to keep this Policy updated as necessary.
- 9.2 Any material changes to the Policy will be subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees.
- 9.3 Notwithstanding the above this Policy will be subject to re-approval by the Board of Trustees every 3 years.

Approved by Board: November 2020

Date for review: November 2023

Annex 1

Procedures for dealing with Complaints Advice to Complainants

1. **Procedures**

1.1 STEP 1 – INITIATING A COMPLAINT

1.1.1 If you have a complaint you should usually first talk to anyone directly involved. At this stage you may wish to informally discuss your complaint with the staff member involved in dealing with the issue (or another member of staff if your complaint concerns the member of staff in question) to try to get the issue resolved.

1.1.2 At this informal stage a senior member of staff can also be involved. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of these informal discussions then you can follow the formal complaints procedure.

1.2 STEP 2 - MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

1.2.1 Put the complaint in writing

A formal complaint must be in writing. If necessary, a member of staff will advise you how to put your complaint formally in writing. The written complaint should be addressed to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive, will let you know within 7 working days who will deal with your complaint.

If your complaint is about the Chief Executive your complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees.

If your complaint is related to Fundraising then please refer to the separate Fundraising Complaints Policy.

1.2.2 Investigation

The person nominated to deal with your complaint (usually a senior staff member) can discuss the complaint with you, anyone else concerned and, if appropriate, convene a meeting between you and the person(s) involved in the complaint.

1.2.3 Decision

The person dealing with your complaint will come to a decision on whether to uphold your complaint and if so any appropriate action that will be taken. A written record of this will be given to you. The complaint will be dealt with within 21 working days of the complaint being received by the person nominated to deal with it. If the matter cannot be resolved in this time period, the complainant will be informed of the delay and the reasons for the delay.

1.2.4 Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the decision you can appeal against it, in writing, to the Chair of Trustees within four weeks of receiving the written decision. The Chair will take your appeal to the Board of Trustees who will elect a group of trustees to review the process by which the decision was reached and the proposed action arising from the decision. If the process or decision was found not to be in line with SUDEP Action Policy then the complaint can be reinvestigated. A written response to you and all concerned will be made in writing within four weeks of receiving the written appeal.

1.2.5 No further appeal can be made.

1.3 MONITORING COMPLAINTS

1.3.1 All formal complaints received and the progress in resolving them will be recorded in a Complaints Register.

1.3.1 The Board of Trustees will be informed of all complaints and this will be recorded in meeting minutes and any necessary action will then be confirmed or set in motion.

1.4 HELP IN MAKING A COMPLAINT

1.4.1 When making a formal complaint it may be useful to have an advocate. This person, of your choice, can support you to put your case effectively. They can be any person e.g. a friend or a member of an advocacy organisation.