

Title of POL: Complaints

Custodian: Group Managing Director

Version Number: 08

Issue date: 01.05.26

Review date: 01.05.29

**POLICY (POL)**

<b>Title of Policy</b>	<b>Complaints</b>		
<b>What type of document is this?</b>	Policy (POL)	<b>Policy Reference Number</b>	HHH-POL-001
<b>Purpose of POL</b>	To ensure that all employees understand Helping Hands complaints policy and procedure.		
<b>ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b>			
Include in this section details of the key roles and associated responsibilities relevant to the document			
<b>Roles</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>		
Group Managing Director and Divisional Directors	Responsible for ensuring that the Complaints procedure is robust and embedded within Helping Hands. To manage Stage 3 complaints (Level 3). Communicating with customers or their representatives within the defined timescales of this policy.		
Senior Managers, Heads of Departments, Area Care Managers	Responsible for supporting functions to manage complaints effectively. To manage Stage 2 complaints (Level 2). Communicating with customers or their representatives within the defined timescales of this policy.		
Branch Care Managers, Department Managers	Overall responsibility for managing Pre-Stage and Stage 1 complaints (Level 1) about the service. Communicating with customers or their representatives within the defined timescales of this policy.		
Customer Experience Team	Responsible for taking receipt of complaints when received into the complaints email box and then forwarding to the relevant manager / department.		

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Quality Audit Team	To audit and provide feedback to services on compliance with the Helping Hands complaints policy and procedure.
Quality Team	To monitor, analyse and report on complaint trends and themes. Provide guidance to services and departments on meeting applicable regulation.
Quality Development Manager	To oversee the response to data protection complaints, including acknowledgement, investigation and provision of outcomes to complainant.
All Employees	To give customers the confidence that their comments are listened to and their complaints are being dealt with effectively. Ensuring feedback is shared within the business.
Scope of POL	<p>This policy covers all complaints received relating directly to the services provided by Helping Hands. Exceptions to this policy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complaints raised by employees about a matter relating to their employment. Complaints of this nature shall be managed via the Grievance Procedure.</li> </ul> <p>This policy also covers data protection related complaints for all persons.</p>

**1.0 Introduction**

This Complaints policy is designed to ensure that it is easy for our customers or their representatives to provide feedback to us.

Feedback may alert us to a concern about possible abuse, neglect or service issue, where this is the case, we shall follow our internal procedures to ensure that we resolve in a timely manner and where possible with a positive outcome.

**2.0 Objective**

This policy covers all complaints received relating directly to the services provided by Helping Hands and includes complaints relating to data protection and GDPR. Objectives include:

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- To provide a complaints framework which is simple to use and is equally accessible to all
- To manage problems as close to their source and as quickly as possible
- To give customers the confidence that their comments are listened to and their complaints are being dealt with effectively
- To ensure action is taken to solve problems and generate a positive attitude to feedback
- To learn from feedback and prevent recurrence of problems
- To generate a consistent approach to complaints throughout Helping Hands
- To protect the reputation of Helping Hands
- To ensure that complaints are shared, and lessons learned are cascaded in a positive way

**3.0 Data Protection Complaints**

3.1 Helping Hands conforms to the requirements GDPR legislation including the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 and maintains a complaints process specifically to respond to complaints relating to data protection or any services provided by Helping Hands GDPR team.

3.2 Data protection complaints are managed in line with the current complaint processes detailed below. The timescales and processes detailed below would be mirrored in any response to a complaint relating to data protection or GDPR.

3.3 Data protection complaints will be investigated and overseen by the Quality Development Manager, they will be the main point of contact.

**4.0 Pre-Stage Complaint**

4.1 Helping Hands aim is to resolve the majority of complaints as soon as possible and preferably before they are accepted into the formal complaints process (pre-stage complaints).

4.2 Pre-stage is considered as the clarification or early resolution stage, when a low level complaint is first received by a Helping Hands employee. Communications would normally be verbally, if it is agreed that this is appropriate by the complainant, and a suitable form of communication, however a record should be maintained, including the outcome and logged appropriately onto the internal system.

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4.3 Pre-stage complaints would normally be resolved to the customers satisfaction within **24 hours** of receipt by the designated manager handling the complaint.

4.4 Where customers express a wish to raise a formal complaint from the beginning of the process, Helping Hands shall process their concern as a formal complaint.

**5.0 Making a Formal Complaint**

5.1 We actively encourage feedback from our customers and stakeholders, so we can continuously improve and ensure we continue to provide a premium service of the highest quality. We will provide as far as is reasonably practical, any help our customers need to understand the complaints procedure or advice on where they may get assistance.

5.2 Helping Hands takes all levels of complaints seriously and aim to handle complaints quickly, effectively, in confidence and in a fair and honest way. Helping Hands assures customers and their representatives that complaints will not result in the withdrawal, reduction or decline in the standards of service we provide.

5.3 Helping Hands may seek further supportive information to ensure that where a representative is acting on behalf of an individual they are doing so in the best interest of the individual and with appropriate authority.

5.4 If our customers are not happy about making a complaint themselves, and do not know someone who can talk or write to us on their behalf, Helping Hands will support in locating someone from an independent organisation to act as an advocate for them. In addition to this we are able to provide information and guidance in different formats for customers or their representatives where required to help overcome any barriers of communication.

5.5 People can make complaints anonymously, anonymous complaints will be dealt with in the same manner, however, we do encourage our customers to provide their contact details so we can communicate the outcome of the investigation.

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**POLICY (POL)****6.0 Timescale for Making a Complaint**

6.1 We encourage customers to raise complaints as soon as they can after the event occurred or the concern came to their attention. Delays in reporting complaints may cause challenges when conducting a thorough and fair investigation. We shall consider whether customers had good reason for making the complaint in the first instance and whether, despite the delay, it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly.

**7.0 Complaint Withdrawal**

7.1 At any stage of a complaints process a person may withdraw the complaint. This may be withdrawn verbally or in writing. The withdrawal of a complaint shall be confirmed in writing.

**8.0 Process for Handling a Complaint**

8.1 Customer complaints will be assessed when received to ensure an appropriate person manages and investigates the complaint. This will prevent any risk of conflict of interest and allow for a fair and honest investigation.

**9.0 Formal Stages of Complaint Management (Stage 1)**

9.1 Complaints submitted by email can be directed to [feedback@helpinghands.co.uk](mailto:feedback@helpinghands.co.uk) or directly to branch or service

9.2 Up on receipt of a complaint, it must be logged by the Helping Hands recipient onto the internal system and will be allocated a reference number and assigned an investigating manager.

9.3 Complaints received in hard copy format (by post/hand delivered), must be scanned upon receipt. A reference number will be assigned, an investigating manager will be allocated, and the scanned letter will be uploaded to the internal system. The complaint will then be directed to the assigned investigating manager for action.

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9.4 The assigned investigating manager will send an acknowledgement letter to the complainant within **24 hours** of receipt of the complaint. The assigned investigating manager will update the internal system with details of action and file the acknowledgment letter to the complainant within the appropriate folder within the system.

9.5 The assigned investigating manager will investigate the complaint in full and maintain updated records on the internal system on the complaint form at all stages. Any additional hard copy evidence to be scanned and placed within the appropriate customer folder within the system.

9.6 Should the appropriate investigating manager require additional time to investigate the complaint (breaching the 20-working day complaint timeframe), additional correspondence will be required to be sent to the complainant to advise accordingly (referred to as a Holding Letter). The assigned investigating manager will update the internal system with details of action and file the correspondence within the appropriate folder.

9.7 Following the investigation, the assigned investigating manager will complete written correspondence to the complainant with a detailed outcome from the original complaint. The assigned investigating manager will update the internal system with details of action and file the correspondence within the appropriate folder. When appropriate, the complaint must be closed down on the internal system.

Stage	Detail
Stage 1	<p>Stage 1 complaints are defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Complaint received in the first instance</li> <li>➤ Complaint managed at operational level</li> </ul> <p>Most complaints are resolved at Stage 1. It is the discretion of a Senior Manager to escalate to Stage 2 if the situation requires the escalation.</p>

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Stage 2	<p>Stage 2 complaints are defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Complaint not resolved at Stage 1 to the customer’s satisfaction</li> <li>➤ Complaint managed at senior level</li> </ul> <p>In circumstances where a Senior Manager has escalated a Stage 1 to Stage 2, an independent Senior Manager will review and manage to Stage 2 complaint.</p> <p>Complaints not successfully resolved at Stage 1 to the customer’s satisfaction may be escalated to Stage 2 and will require an independent Senior Manager to review and manage the Stage 2 escalation</p>
Stage 3	<p>Stage 3 complaints are defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Complaint that has not been resolved to the customers satisfaction at Stage 2</li> </ul> <p>An independent person may be required to investigate the customer’s complaint which may be undertaken by persons at Director level. Complaints not resolved at Stage 2 will be managed by an independent person who will review the complaint and investigation, conduct a further investigation and make an informed decision on any further and required action.</p>
Further steps	<p>If the customer is not satisfied with a complaint response at Stage 3, the customer may refer their complaint to the LGO or Ombudsman Wales and ask for the complaint to be independently reviewed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ LGO: Tel: 0300 061 0614 – Website: <a href="http://www.lgo.org.uk">www.lgo.org.uk</a></li> <li>○ Ombudsman Wales –Tel: 03000790 0203 – Website: <a href="http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk">www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk</a></li> </ul>

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Regulators	<p>Helping Hands Services are registered with, and regulated by, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Customers can contact the regulators directly with any concerns they may have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Care Quality Commission – Citygate Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4PA. Tel: 03000 616161 – Website: <a href="http://www.cqc.org.uk">www.cqc.org.uk</a></li> <li>○ Care Inspectorate Wales – Welsh Government, Rhydycar Business Park, CF48 1UZ – Tel: 0300 7900 126 – Website: <a href="http://www.careinspectorate.wales">www.careinspectorate.wales</a></li> </ul> <p>For Data Protection Related complaints –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Information Commissioner Office (ICO) – Tel: 0303 123 1113 – Website: <a href="https://ico.org.uk/">https://ico.org.uk/</a></li> </ul>
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**10.0** How to Contact us at Helping Hands

10.1 In the first instance we encourage our customer(s) to directly feedback to their local Branch Care Manager / branch

10.2 Contact details for Managers can be found on the Customer Support Plan or on our website: <https://www.helpinghandshomecare.co.uk/>

10.3 For Data protection complaints the above contact details will enable individuals to make a complaint relating to the handling of their data. People can also make a data protection related complaint by emailing [feedback@helpinghands.co.uk](mailto:feedback@helpinghands.co.uk)

10.4 Alternatively, you can also contact our Support Office team:

Contact us by writing in:  
 Customer Experience Team  
 Helping Hands House  
 10 Tything Road West  
 Arden Forest Ind Estate

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<p>Alcester Warwickshire B49 6EP</p> <p>Contact us by Email For Complaints: <a href="mailto:feedback@helpinghands.co.uk">feedback@helpinghands.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:enquiries@helpinghands.co.uk">enquiries@helpinghands.co.uk</a></p> <p>Contact us via the Website <a href="http://www.helpinghandshomecare.co.uk/about-us/contact-us/">www.helpinghandshomecare.co.uk/about-us/contact-us/</a></p> <p>Contact us by telephone: 01789 762 121</p>	
<b>TRAINING</b>	Yes
Is training required?	
Details of training	<p>Learning Management System Complaints module</p> <p>Guidance from the Quality and Customer Experience team</p> <p>New employees to receive guidance during induction</p>
<b>COMPLIANCE</b>	The policy will be monitored and reviewed should company process of Complaint guidelines require change. Complaint statistics will be frequently measured to ensure compliance to policy and any breach of policy will be addressed.
How is compliance within this document going to be monitored?	

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND PROCEDURAL INFORMATION		
	Positive/Negative/N/A	Comments
Does the document have a positive or negative impact on one group of people over another based on their:		
• Age?	N/A	
• Disability	N/A	
• Gender assignment?	N/A	
• Pregnancy and maternity (which includes breastfeeding)	N/A	
• Race (including nationality, ethnic or national origins or colour)?	N/A	
• Marriage or civil partnership?	N/A	
• Religion or belief?	N/A	
• Sex?	N/A	
• Sexual orientation?	N/A	
If you have identified any potential impact (including any positive impact which may result in more favourable treatment for one particular group of people over another), are any	N/A	

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exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?			
If the impact on one of the above groups is likely to be negative:			
Can the impact be avoided?	N/A		
What alternatives are there to achieving the document's aim without the impact?	N/A		
Can the impact be reduced by taking different action?	N/A		
Is there an impact on employee, customer or someone else's privacy?	N/A		
Changes since previous version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated policy to reference Data Protection complaints procedures, scope and sections 2.0, 3.0, 9.0 and 10.0.</li> </ul>		
Who was involved in developing /reviewing/amending the document? (list titles)	Head of Quality Executive Assistant Divisional Directors Quality Development Manager Quality Development Lead		
How confidential is this document	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Public</td> <td>Can be shared freely within and outside of Helping Hands</td> </tr> </table>	Public	Can be shared freely within and outside of Helping Hands
Public	Can be shared freely within and outside of Helping Hands		
References	<i>The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014</i> <i>The Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2017</i> <i>Data (Use and Access) Act 2025</i>		
Associated Documents	<i>Complaint Acknowledgment Letter Template</i> <i>Compliant Delay Holding Letter Template</i> <i>Complaint Escalation Letter Template</i> <i>Complaint Response Letter Template stage 1 &amp; 2</i> <i>Complaint Response Letter Template stage 3</i>		

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CONTROLLED DOCUMENT

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