

Title of Document	Complaints Policy
Name of Department	Executive Team

What type of document is this?	Policy	This sets out instructions for how a particular procedure in Helping Hands is to be routinely carried out	
Which Helping Hands POL/SOP/W.I does this document relate to?	NA	Reference number of POL/SOP/W.I	NA

Which Operational Priority/Priorities does this document link to?	Governance Framework	Superior Client Care	People, Performance & Culture	Business Growth
	Internal & External Communications			

Custodian of document	Group Managing Director	Committee/Group responsible for this document	Policy Committee
Approval date and committee chairperson signature	29.08.24	When is its next scheduled review?	29.08.27

Who does it apply to?	All Helping Hands staff at the facility / All staff working with Customers					
	Does it apply to bank workers?	Yes	Does it apply to agency staff?	NA	Does it apply to third party contractors?	Yes

Purpose of the Policy	To ensure that all staff understand the company complaints to support internal and external complaints
------------------------------	--

Key Complaints Policy Requirements

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibility
Group Managing Director Regional Care Directors & Directors	Responsible for ensuring that the Complaints procedure is robust and embedded within Helping Hands. To monitor trends in complaints and support appropriate actions as required. To manage Stage 3 complaints (Level 3). Communicating with customers or their representatives within the defined timescales of this policy.
Senior Managers	Responsible for supporting the Operations function to manage complaints effectively. To manage Stage 2 complaints (Level 2). Communicating with customers or their representatives within the defined timescales of this policy.
Operational Managers (Branch Care Managers / Live In Care Managers)	Overall responsibility for managing Stage 1 complaints (Level 1) about the service. Communicating with customers or their representatives within the defined timescales of this policy.
All Staff	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.
Quality Assurance	Responsible for taking receipt of complaints when received into the complaints email box and then forwarding to the relevant manager/department. Responsible for responding to Regulatory Bodies i.e. Local Government Ombudsman when requested to do so and to support the manager/department who is dealing with the complaint

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 Scope

This policy covers all complaints received relating directly to the services provided by Helping Hands. Exceptions to this policy include:

- complaints raised by employees about a matter relating to their employment. Complaints of this nature shall be managed via the Grievance Procedure.

3.0 Objective

1. To provide a complaints framework which is simple to use and is equally accessible to all
2. To manage problems as close to their source and as quickly as possible
3. To give customers the confidence that their comments are listened to and their complaints are being dealt with effectively

4. To ensure action is taken to solve problems and generate a positive attitude to feedback
5. To learn from feedback and prevent recurrence of problems
6. To generate a consistent approach to complaints throughout Helping Hands
7. To protect the reputation of Helping Hands
8. To ensure that complaints are shared, and lessons learned are cascaded in a positive way

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 or concerns).
- 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.
- 4.3 Low level 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 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 take 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.

- 5.6 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.

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 Customers 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 or directly to branch or service
- 9.2 Up on receipt of a complaint they must be logged by the the Helping Hands receiptant onto the internal system and will be allocated a reference number and an assigned an investigating manager.
- 9.3 Complaints received in hard copy format (by post/hand delivered), must be scanned upon receipt. A reference number and 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.
- 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 against the complaint reference log at all stages. Any additional hard copy evidence to be scanned and placed within the appropriate client folder within the system.

- 9.6 Should the appropriate investigating manager require additional time to investigate the complaint (breaching the 20 day complaint timeframe UK – OR - 14 day complaint timeframe for WALES), 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"> ➤ Complaint received in the first instance ➤ Complaint managed at operational level <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>
Stage 2	<p>Stage 2 complaints are defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Complaint not resolved at Stage 1 to the customers satisfaction ➤ Complaint managed at senior level <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 customers 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"> ➤ Complaint that has not been resolved to the customers satisfaction at Stage 2 <p>An independent person may be required to investigate the customers complaint which may be undertaken by persons at Director level.</p> <p>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"> ○ LGO: Tel: 0300 061 0614 – Website: www.lgo.org.uk ○ Ombudsman Wales -Tel: 03000790 0203 – Website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
Regulators	<p>Helping Hands Services are registered with, and regulated by, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). You can contact our regulators directly with any concerns you may have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Care Quality Commission – Citygate Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4PA. Tel: 03000 616161 – Website: www.cqc.org.uk

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Care Inspectorate Wales – Welsh Government, Rhydycar Business Park, CF48 1UZ – Tel: 0300 7900 126 – Website: www.careinspectorate.wales
--	---

How to Contact us

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

Contact details for Managers can be found on the Customer Care Plan or on our website:

<https://www.helpinghandshomecare.co.uk/>

Alternatively you can also contact our Support Office team:

Contact us by writing in:

Quality Assurance Team

Helping Hands House

10 Tything Road West

Arden Forest Ind Estate

Alcester

Warwickshire

B49 6EP

Or alternativley contact your local servicing branch

Contact us by Email

For Complaints:

feedback@helpinghands.co.uk

enquiries@helpinghands.co.uk

Contact us via the Website

www.helpinghandshomecare.co.uk/about-us/contact-us/

Contact us by telephone:

01789 762121 OR contact your local service / branch

TRAINING

Is training required?	Yes
Details of training	Learning Management System Complaints module Guidance from the Quality Assurance team New staff to receive guidance during induction

COMPLIANCE

How is compliance with the POL going to be monitored	The policy will be monitored and reviewed should company process of Complaint guidelines require change. Complaint statistics will be frequently measure to ensure compliance to policy and any breach of policy will be addressed.
---	---

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 on the basis of their:		
• age?	NA	
• disability?	NA	
• gender reassignment?	NA	
• pregnancy and maternity (which includes breastfeeding)?	NA	
• Marriage and civil partnership	NA	
• race (including nationality, ethnic or national origins or colour)?	NA	
• religion or belief?	NA	
• sex?	NA	
• sexual orientation?	NA	
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 exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	NA	
If the impact on one of the above groups is likely to be negative:		
• Can the impact be avoided?	NA	
• What alternatives are there to achieving the document's aim without the impact?	NA	
• Can the impact be reduced by taking different action?	NA	
• Is there an impact on staff, client or someone else's privacy?	NA	<i>If yes, privacy impact assessment required</i>

What was the previous version number of this document?	Version 04	
Changes since previous version	Amended complaints emails to feedback@	
Who was involved in developing/reviewing /amending the POL?	Quality Director Quality Assurance Team Regional Care Directors Executive Assistant to GMD	
How confidential is this document?	Public	Can be shared freely within and outside of Helping Hands

--	--	--

References	Complaint's stage 1 process workflow
Associated Documents	Appendix 1 Complaint Acknowledgment Letter Template Appendix 2 Compliant Delay Holding Letter Template Appendix 3 Complaint Escalation Letter Template Appendix 4 Complaint Response Letter Template stage 1 & 2 Appendix 5 Complaint Response Letter Template stage 3