

Alzheimer Scotland

Complaints Policy

Policy Information	
Scope of policy:	<p>At Alzheimer Scotland we do everything we can to resolve problems before the need for a formal complaint develops as we hope most problems can be sorted by talking to the people most closely involved.</p> <p>When the need to formally complain arises, this policy is for complainants who are not Alzheimer Scotland employees or volunteers. There is separate grievance, disciplinary and whistleblowing procedures for use by staff, volunteers, members and Trustees.</p> <p>This policy guides you through our complaints procedures.</p>
Policy prepared by:	Julie Drummond Executive Support Lead
Approved by:	Geraldine Ditta
Policy review date:	21.10.22
Next review date:	21.10.25
Version:	2 (previous version 7.8.17)
Printable (Y/N):	Y

Introduction

1 Making a complaint.

We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve. Our leaflet 'Do you have a comment, suggestion or complaint?' is provided to people using our services and is available on our website www.alzscot.org or via our Helpline.

If something goes wrong or you feel dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This document describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

Definitions

2 What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of any interactions made by us or on our behalf.

Purpose and scope

3 What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- failure or refusal to provide a service
- inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual
- failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves); or
- disagreement with a decision, (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).
- Your complaint may involve more than one Alzheimer Scotland service or be about someone working on our behalf.

4 What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- a request for compensation only
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (if you decide to take legal action, you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process)
- disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector
- disagreement with decisions or conditions that are based upon social work recommendations, but determined by a court or other statutory body, for example decisions made by a children's panel, parole board or mental health tribunal
- a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts
- a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment

- a concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern)
- a concern about a child or an adult's safety
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our [Unacceptable Actions Policy or equivalent]; or
- a concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf).

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

4 Who can complain?

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service (for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser). If you are making a complaint on someone else's behalf, you will normally need their written consent. Please also read the section on Getting help to make your complaint below.

Policy

5 How do I complain?

You can complain in person at any of our offices or centres, by phone, in writing, by email. It is easier for us to address complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the department or locality concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff where you feel your complaint has taken place and they can try to resolve the issue.

When complaining, please tell us:

- your full name and contact details
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what you feel has gone wrong; and
- when and where it happened; and
- what outcome you are seeking.

6 Who do I contact to complain?

Our contact details

Local contact details:

Your local contact details can be found on our website – www.alzscot.org

National contact details:

Main telephone number – 0131 243 1453

Email – feedback@alzscot.org

In writing – Alzheimer Scotland, 160 Dundee Street, Edinburgh EH11 1DQ

7 How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about; or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

7 What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

Stage 1: Frontline response

We aim to respond to complaints quickly (where possible when you first tell us about the issue). This may lead to an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at stage 1 in five working days or less unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you are not satisfied with the response, we give you at stage 1, you may decide to take your complaint to stage 2. You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at stage 2 either:

- within six months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain; or
- within two months of receiving your stage 1 response (if this is later).

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

Stage 2: Investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at stage 1 and those that clearly require investigation, and so are handled directly at stage 2. If you do not wish your complaint to be handled at stage 1, you can ask us to handle from stage 2 instead and should contact our national team (details in section 6).

When using stage 2:

- we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- we will confirm our understanding of the complaint with you, the method of communication you prefer, confirm what outcome you are looking for, and we will investigate.
- we will try to resolve your complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation) and will respond in writing within 20 working days
- where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will tell you our revised time limits and keep you updated on progress.

8 What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have given you our final decision, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can write to the Chief Executive (Alzheimer Scotland, 160 Dundee Street, Edinburgh EH11 1DQ). If your complaint is about the Chief Executive, you should write to the Convener c/o the same address. You should explain why you originally complained and why you are still unhappy. The Chief Executive will arrange for a full review of your complaint and the process of investigation which will be completed within 30 working days.

You can also ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at your complaint.

The SPSO are an independent organisation that investigates complaints. They are not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

You can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint if:

- you have gone all the way through our complaints handling procedure
- it is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and
- the matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

The SPSO will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of our final response to your complaint. You can do this online at www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form or call them on Freephone 0800 377 7330.

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint. See the section on **Getting help to make your complaint** below.

The SPSO's contact details are:

SPSO
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

(if you would like to visit in person, you must make an appointment first)

Their freepost address is FREEPOST SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

There are some complaints that have an alternative route for independent review. We will tell you how to seek independent review when we give you our final response on your complaint.

Care complaints

If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose whether to complain to us or the Care Inspectorate. You can find out more about their complaint's procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting them.

The Care Inspectorate has several offices around Scotland. Please refer to:
<https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/complaints>
Tel: 0345 600 9527
Email: concerns@careinspectorate.gov.scot

If your complaint relates to services we are commissioned to provide you can contact the Local Authority or Health and Social Care Partnership in the area which the complaint is made.

Other complaints

Depending on what your complaint is about there are other organisations you can also contact. You can find out more about their complaint's procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting them.

To complain about our Dementia Helpline:
Helplines Partnership www.helplines.org
Tel: 0300 330 7777
Email: info@helplines.org

To complain about fundraising:
Scottish Fundraising Standards Panel
www.goodfundraising.scot/make-a-complaint/
Email: complaints@goodfundraising.scot
Tel: 0808 164 2520

You may raise concerns about issues which cannot be handled through our procedures with other agencies who may be able to provide assistance with, or may have an interest in.

This may include:

The Mental Welfare Commission:
Website: www.mwcscot.org.uk

The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland:
Website: www.cycps.org.uk

The Scottish Social Services Council:
Website: www.sssc.uk.com

Helplines Partnership
Website: www.helplines.org

Scottish Fundraising Standards Panel
Website: www.goodfundraising.scot/make-a-complaint/

COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)
Website: www.cosca.org.uk/quidance-policies/complaints

9 Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance:

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
Tel: 0131 510 9410 Website: <http://www.siaa.org.uk>

You can find out about advisers in your area through Citizens Advice Scotland:

Citizens Advice Scotland
Website: <http://www.cas.org.uk> or check your phone book for your local citizens advice bureau.

10 Anonymous complaints

You should feel safe and encouraged to complain without any fear of retribution, but you may prefer to remain anonymous. Anonymous complaints will be investigated but this will be to a limited extent if the person investigating is not given enough information on which to proceed.

11 Confidentiality

In some instances, there may be a conflict between safeguarding information that is subject to confidentiality and satisfying the need to make information available to you. Alzheimer Scotland has an open records policy that should be consulted in dealing with requests for access to individuals' files. You do not have a right of access to personal information held in the files of people using our services about a third party unless the third party gives their consent which must be documented.

You may request that your identity is not disclosed, particularly if you are complaining about a specific service. In such instances Alzheimer Scotland should respect such requests. However, the Complaints Investigation Officer needs to know who is making the complaint.

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities' duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, please tell us in person, contact us on 0131 243 1453 or email us at feedback@alzscot.org.