Shaftesbury
All together better for disability

September 2026

Complaints and Concerns Policy and Procedure

This document relates to	
Shaftesbury Care Operational Staff	✓
Central Support Services	✓
Shaftesbury Education	✓
Shaftesbury Children and Young People Services (non educational)	✓
Livability Contracting Services	✓

© Copyright Shaftesbury

Contents

At a Glance 3
Introduction 5
1. Aims 5
2. Definition of a complaint or concern 6
3. The 5 key principles we will follow 6
4. How to make a complaint 7
5. Timescales for making a complaint 7
6. Process 8
7. Confidentiality 9
8. Persistent and repeated complaints 10
9. Complaint recording 10
10. Duty of Candour 11
11. Appeals process 11
12. Regulators 12
Policy and procedure ownership 14

© Copyright Shaftesbury

At a Glance

Purpose

Ensure complaints and concerns are handled seriously, fairly, and transparently, with learning used to improve services.

Scope

- All Shaftesbury services: care, education, children's services, central support, contracting

Definition

- Complaint/Concern: expression of dissatisfaction requiring a response
- Concern – request for reassurance
- Informal complaint – resolved quickly
- Formal complaint – requires investigation

Key Principles

- Accessible and straightforward process
- Clear communication throughout
- Resolution-focused approach
- Supports organisational learning and improvement

How to Make a Complaint

- Speak to staff or service manager
- Phone/email complaints team
- Use Complaints App (Microsoft 365 / 7Net)
- All complaints must be recorded on the Complaints App

Timescales & Process

- Acknowledged within 3 working days
- Agree expectations and outcomes with complainant
- Provide named contact (not investigator)
- Updates every 5 working days if delayed

What Complainants Can Expect

- Regular updates and clear communication
- Factual response with explanation, outcome, and actions
- Apology where appropriate

© Copyright Shaftesbury

- Learning and prevention of recurrence
- Information on appeals and regulators

Recording & Governance

- All complaints logged on Complaints App
- Central allocation of investigator
- Reports and responses uploaded before closure

Confidentiality

- Handled in strict confidence
- Separate from care records
- Compliant with data protection legislation

Duty of Candour

- Be open and transparent when things go wrong
- Provide apology, investigation, and actions
- Share learning to prevent recurrence

Persistent Complaints

- Managed via care/support plans and ongoing review

Appeals

- Must be made within 7 days
- Independently reviewed
- May lead to further investigation or escalation

Regulators

- CQC (England)
- Care Inspectorate Wales
- RQIA (Northern Ireland)
- Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

Core Outcome

A clear, accessible complaints process that resolves issues and drives continuous service improvement.

© Copyright Shaftesbury

Introduction

This document outlines our commitment to dealing with complaints about the services we provide. It provides information about how we manage, respond to, and learn from complaints made about our services. Shaftesbury will treat complaints seriously and ensure that complaints, concerns and issues raised by all stakeholders are properly investigated in an unbiased, non-judgmental, transparent, timely and appropriate manner. The outcome of any investigation, along with any resulting actions will be explained to the complainant by the investigating officer.

1. Aims

We are committed to providing high quality care for all, which is a core principle of our vision and purpose. We will ensure that those who use our services, and their representatives can seek advice, provide feedback or make a complaint about the services we provide.

When dealing with a complaint we will:

- Listen to the views of all those involved
- Treat all involved in the process with dignity and respect
- Be open and transparent
- Ensure the process is accessible to all
- Follow an evidenced based process during the investigation and response process
- Sympathetically respond to complaints and concerns in appropriate timeframes
- Provide opportunities for people to offer feedback on the quality of service provided
- Provide complainants with support and guidance throughout the complaints process
- Provide a level of detail appropriate to the seriousness of the complaint
- Identify the causes of complaints and to take action to prevent recurrences
- Implemented learning by using 'lessons learnt' as a driver for change and improvement
- Ensure that the care of complainants is not adversely affected because of making a complaint

© Copyright Shaftesbury

2. Definition of a complaint or concern

A complaint or concern is an expression of dissatisfaction about an act, omission or decision of Shaftesbury, either verbal or written, and whether justified or not, which requires a response.

A concern may be defined as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. An example – you are worried that the cook will not have your dinner read for you by 12 noon as you are going shopping at 12:30pm.

An informal complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about action or lack of actions that you are not happy with and can be resolved straight away. An example – you don't like any of the options on today's menu and staff have not offered any other options for you, so you tell the manager, and she resolves the matter by offering an alternative that you are happy with.

A formal complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about action or lack of actions that you are not happy we have resolved or will take longer to resolve. An example – due to staff absence you are not able to get your 1-1 when you want it, and the manager was not able to resolve this matter on the day.

3. The 5 key principles we will follow

- **Principle one**: ensure that the complaints process is accessible
- **Principle two**: ensure that the complaints process is straightforward for the people we support and their representatives
- **Principle three**: ensure that appropriate systems are in place to keep people we support informed throughout the complaints process
- **Principle four**: ensure that the complaints process is resolution focused
- **Principle five**: ensure that quality assurance processes are in place to enable organisational learning and service improvement from complaints and feedback

© Copyright Shaftesbury

4. How to make a complaint

A complaint can be made:

- By speaking to a staff member in the service
- By emailing or telephoning the manager of the service
- By telephoning the complaints team 0191 300 9970
- Via the Complaints App which is only accessible to staff (the app can be found on Power Apps in Microsoft office 365 or via the link on 7Net (https://www.oneShaftesbury.org/) under:

This Useful links icon which will take you to the app.

***All compliants from whichever source will be recorded and managed via the Complaints App.**

We will endeavour to make the necessary reasonable adjustments to receive, investigate and respond to any complaint. For people whose first language is not English, we will access telephone interpreting services. We can also accept and respond to complaints in alternative formats.

Shaftesbury has an easy read booklet to for people we support to make a complaint, this should be made available to all the people we support.

5. Timescales for making a complaint

Complaints should be made at the time of the act, omission or decision to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly.

We do recognise that there may be a delay at times, if the person supported requires support to raise the complaint or needs time to discuss their concerns with a family member, friend, advocate or health care professional.

© Copyright Shaftesbury

6. Process

All complaints will be acknowledged no later than three working days after the day the complaint is received (the acknowledgement will usually be in writing but can be verbally in some circumstances although this should be the exception rather than the norm).

An offer should be made to discuss with the complainant the following:

- The handling of the complaint
- Timescales for responding
- Expectations and desired outcome if unclear

If the complaint has been made verbally, the complainant should be given a copy of their verbal statement which is considered the formal complaint and asked to confirm that it represents the issues they wish to raise. The staff member that the complaint is made to should then add the complaint to the Complaint App. This will trigger an allocated of an investigator to investigate the complaint.

The complainant should be given a named contact along with their contact details (either locally or nationally) who will be their point of contact throughout the complaints process. This should not be the investigating officer, or anyone involved in the complaint.

The complainant can expect that:

- They will be kept up to date with the progress of their complaint
- If a complaint or concern has passed the 5 working day target (or the timescale agreed with the complainant if different), the complainant will receive an update every 5 working days thereafter the target has been surpassed. This could be by telephone, email or letter but the format should be agreed with the complainant at the start of the process.
- The complainant can expect to receive a response with assurance that action has been taken to prevent a recurrence.
- The complainant will be informed of any learning following the investigation.
- Our response to a complainant will be wherever possible by their preferred method of communication. On receipt of the investigation report a response to the complaint will be prepared and the investigating officer will include information on the next stages of the complaint's procedure should the complainant wish to appeal.

© Copyright Shaftesbury

- An explanation of how the complaint has been considered.
- An apology if appropriate.
- An explanation based on facts.
- Whether the complaint in full or in part is upheld.
- The conclusions reached in relation to the complaint including any remedial action that the organisation considers to be appropriate.
- Confirmation that the organisation is satisfied any action has been or will be actioned.
- Where possible, we will respond to people about any lessons learnt.
- Information and contact details for the appeals process and contact details for the appropriate regulator.

A key consideration is to ensure arrangements are flexible; treating each case according to its individual nature, with a focus on satisfactory outcomes, organisational learning and the lessons should lead to service improvement.

Shaftesbury is committed to providing quality responses and as such, we will be carrying out regular reviews of complaints handling, including internal quality monitoring. If at any time during the complaints process the complainant, their representative or advocate decides they would like to withdraw the complaint this request can be made either verbally or in writing. The withdrawal of a complaint will be acknowledged in writing by the organisation.

7. Confidentiality

Complaints will be handled in the strictest of confidence in accordance with our Confidentiality Policy and will be kept separately from the care records of the person supported. Information about the complaint will only be disclosed to those who have a demonstrable need to access to it.

Suitable arrangements are in place for the handling of identifiable data about people we support to be compliant with the Data Protection Act and other legal obligations, such as the Human Rights Act 1998 and the common law duty of confidentiality.

The Caldicott Report sets out a number of general principles that health and social care organisations should use when reviewing its use of information about the people supported. The designated Caldicott Guardians are responsible for ensuring that confidentiality is maintained. Confidentiality will be maintained in such a way that only

© Copyright Shaftesbury

managers and staff who are leading the investigation know the contents of the case. Anyone disclosing information to others who are not directly involved in this may be dealt with under disciplinary procedures.

8. Persistent and repeated complaints

There will be occasions where a person for a variety of reasons wishes to make repeated complaints about the same matter/issue.

The principle is that we will seek to uphold the individual's rights to make a complaint and work to reach a satisfactory outcome. If the available resolution has been offered and there continues to be a complaint of the same matter/issue, then completing repeated complaints forms is unlikely to result in an improved outcome.

Therefore, in agreement with a senior manager the specific matter/issue being raised must be logged in the care /support plan as an area needing resolution. The complaints log will need to record that this is the action that has been taken for all further complaints on this matter/issue.

The agreed actions will need to be recorded in the care/support plan and staff need to complete the daily records to record any outcomes about the matter/issue.

This will enable the matter/issue to be discussed and reviewed in key worker meetings and the individual's reviews.

Care must be taken to identify the specific nature of repeated complaints, so they are addressed with a robust and transparent approach and not combined into an overall level of dissatisfaction.

The matter/issue should also be discussed with the named social worker or duty team, if we are not able to resolve it.

9. Complaint recording

All complaints including verbal must be logged onto the Complaint App.

Internal stakeholders can log a complaint directly onto the App, if managers receive a complaint by another route, they should transfer the data onto the Complaint App.

© Copyright Shaftesbury

External stakeholders can log a complaint by sending it to the complaints email address complaints@Shaftesburygroup.org which will be added to the Complaints App.

The complaint will only be investigated once it has been allocated to the investigating manager, which is done centrally.

The investigation report along with the final letter, must be sent to the complainant and uploaded onto the Complaints App so that the complaint can be closed on the system.

10. Duty of Candour

The Duty of Candour is a requirement for all service providers of regulated activities.

The Duty of Candour requires Shaftesbury to act in an open and transparent way in relation to care and treatment provided to people we support. This duty applies to our dealings with the people we support themselves, or, in limited circumstances, a person acting on their behalf.

Where a person is affected adversely when receiving a service, they have a right for this to be recognised, for the organisation to investigate, and where any complaint is upheld, to receive an apology and for changes to be implemented in the service to address future practice.

For every person in Shaftesbury who makes a written complaint we will respond in line with the Duty of Candour requirements, acknowledging in writing with an apology and a commitment to learn from the event. Further we will seek to share the learning and outcomes where applicable to minimise the risk of repeated occurrences

The Involvement and Communication with Relatives, Advocates, Friends and Carers Procedure provides specific guidance on how incidents should be communicated to meet the Duty of Candour.

11. Appeals process

If complainants are not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation, they can appeal. The appeal should be forwarded to the Shaftesbury Complaints Receiver. The appeal should be made within 7 days of the outcome being received by the complainant.

Appeals can be made verbally or in writing, local managers should assist the person we support with the process to raise, make and register the appeal. Once made the

© Copyright Shaftesbury

appeal has been received it will be logged onto the Complaints App and an appeals investigator will be allocated to review the original investigation.

The process for managing appeals is as follows:

- The first investigation will be reviewed by the appeals investigator. If after reviewing it is the opinion of the appeals investigator that there are no grounds for appeal, the complainant will be informed through their preferred method of communication which could be via a meeting or a letter. If a meeting is held, the minutes and outcome letter will be sent following the meeting.
- If further investigations or actions are required a further investigation will be commissioned with another manager not connected with the event, this will be allocated centrally. The complainant will be informed, and the timescales explained.
- The outcomes of this further investigation will be discussed with the responsible senior manager or director, and a proposal for resolution agreed.
- The complainant should be informed of the outcome of the appeal by letter with a view to closure. This letter must inform the complainant of their legal right to inform the relevant regulator or complain to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman or NI Ombudsman if they are still not satisfied.
- Regulators will not usually investigate a complaint until the provider has had an opportunity to respond and resolve matters.
- Information on local advocacy services should be available through the local service.

12. Regulators

Regulators generally will not get involved in individual complaints but require a thorough response to the complainant. They will however assess the impact on service provision and respond accordingly.

A complainant can raise a complaint with the relevant local authority. If they are unhappy with the outcome of their investigation after exhausting the complaints process then contact can be made by the complainant with Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) or Northern Ireland (NI) Ombudsman asking for their case to be reviewed. This provides a free, independent service if the complainant feels that the local authority have not dealt with their complaint satisfactorily.

Contact details of organisations that regulate and inspect Shaftesbury services are below:

© Copyright Shaftesbury

English Regulator

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Care Quality Commission, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4PA

enquiries@cqc.org.uk Tel: 0300 616161

Welsh Regulator

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Complaints in Wales are regulated through the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and are as follows:

http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk/

Or you can write to:

Care Inspectorate Wales, Welsh Government, Rhydycar Business Park, CF48 1UZ.

Northern Ireland Regulator

Complaints and Representations Manager

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) 9th Floor Riverside Tower, 5 Lanyon Place, Belfast, BT1 3BT

https://rqia.org.uk/

Tel: 028 9051 7500

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO).

LGO Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Email: advice@lgo.org.uk

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

© Copyright Shaftesbury

Policy and procedure ownership

Procedure Name	Version
Complaints and Concerns Policy	12.1

Date published	Date for next review
September 2026	June 2029

Approved by	Signature	Date
Jane Percy	*Jane Percy*	September 2026

© Copyright Shaftesbury

History	Date	Author	Reason
6.0	February 2018	Liz Mell	Revised
7.0	January 2022	Jane Percy	Rewrite
8.0	May 2023	Jane Percy	Reviewed & Updated in line with Complaints App Launch
9.0	December 2023	Mandy Himpson	Review
10.0	October 2024	Jane Percy	Review
11.0	October 2025	Jane Percy	Review
12.0	June 2026	Jane Percy	Review
12.1	September 2026	Melanie Waterman	Minor amend to the LGO name change approved by Jane

© Copyright Shaftesbury