

# TOUCHSTONE



## **Compliments and complaints policy and guidance for staff, volunteers and service users and others**

**November 2013**

## **Introduction**

1. This policy and guidance is to help you tell Touchstone what you think. You may want to say something positive, and give thanks or a compliment to Touchstone. You may want to say something negative, and complain about Touchstone.
2. There is guidance for Touchstone staff on how to use this policy (Appendix A).

## **Compliments and thanks**

3. Sometimes people want to thank Touchstone or a member of staff/volunteer. Sometimes people want to give a compliment and tell us that we have done something well.
4. Service users, carers, family members or representatives can give a compliment or thanks. You can do this by writing to us, speaking to a member of staff in person, telephoning or texting Touchstone.
5. There is a compliments form attached to this policy (Appendix B). You can ask someone to help you complete it. You should then send it in to Touchstone.
6. The Chief Executive will read your compliments form. The Board will also be told about your compliment. Touchstone will make sure that your appreciation is passed on to the relevant staff member or team.
7. Touchstone staff are not allowed to accept personal gifts from service users/carers or other people connected to Touchstone.

## **Complaints**

8. Touchstone always tries to provide the best possible service. But things can go wrong. Touchstone needs to know about things that have gone wrong so that we can put them right. Touchstone learns from complaints. We are able to change services and make improvements to the way we do things.
9. This policy and guidance has been written in plain English. If there is anything you do not understand, please ask a member of Touchstone staff to explain.

## Who can complain?

10. These types of people can make a complaint:

A person currently receiving a service from Touchstone.

A person who wants to receive a service from Touchstone.

A person who has been declined a service from Touchstone.

A spokesperson or representative of a current, potential, or declined service user.

A person receiving services from another agency on behalf of Touchstone.

A person who does not currently work for Touchstone and has applied for a job at Touchstone and is unhappy with the recruitment process.

A Touchstone volunteer.

## How to make a complaint – stage one

11. To make a complaint:

- Go to a Touchstone office
- Telephone Touchstone
- Email Touchstone or write a letter saying you want to make an informal complaint.
- Text us.

12. We call this a *stage one informal complaint*. We will try to resolve your problem there and then. If you are unhappy with the resolution you can speak to the manager of the service. The manager will try to resolve your problem there and then.

## How to make a complaint – stage two

13. If you choose, you can skip stage one and go straight to stage two.

14. If you are unhappy after stage one, you can complain in writing to Touchstone. We call this a *stage two formal complaint*. To do this you should fill in a complaints form or write about your complaint in a letter, email or even text and send it to the Chief Executive. A complaints form is attached to this policy (Appendix C). The address is on the form. If you don't want to put your complaint in writing, you can telephone the Chief Executive to explain the problem, in person.

15. The Chief Executive will write to you within **5 working days** of receiving your complaint. You will be told who will investigate your

complaint; the Investigating Officer. This will usually be a Manager or a Director.

16. The Investigating Officer will write to you with a full response within **15 working days** of receiving the complaint. Sometimes, if a staff member is ill or on holiday or for some other reason outside our control, we may need longer but we will explain the reasons for any delay and will let you know when you can expect a full reply.
17. If you have a representative or spokesperson, we will also send them copies of any letters, with your permission.

### **Having a representative or a spokesperson**

18. You can ask someone to help you make a complaint, write a letter or fill in the complaints form.
19. This person is your representative or spokesperson. This could be a carer, family member, friend, a member of Touchstone staff. It could be a person who works for a different organisation such as an advice service, a lawyer, a councillor or an MP.
20. Touchstone encourages you to get advice from an advocacy organisation which may be able to help you. You will find a list of advocacy organisations at Appendix D of this policy.
21. You need to sign the complaints form to say that you fully agree with and support what your representative has said.

### **How to make a complaint - stage three**

22. If you are dissatisfied with the Investigating Officer's report, you can ask an Appeal Panel to review your complaint. You need to write to the Chief Executive to inform us that you want to appeal. You must do this within 10 working days of us sending the Investigating Officer's report.
23. We will write to you within 5 **working days** of receiving your request for appeal to tell you what will happen next.
24. Touchstone will organise an Appeal Panel to look at your complaint and how Touchstone responded in stages one and/or two. The Panel will be the Chief Executive and two other Board members. We will try to give you the names of the Appeal Panel Board Members in advance of the meeting. We will also try to hold the Appeal Panel

meeting within 15 working days of sending you the letter at point 23 above.

25. You and your representative can come to the Appeal Panel meeting, or write to give more information. The stage two Investigating Officer will give their opinion to the Appeal Panel.
26. The Appeal Panel will carefully review the evidence; letters, forms, witness statements and documents relating to the complaint and how it was dealt with. They will write a report and come to a conclusion. Decisions and recommendations that the Appeal Panel make are final.
27. We aim to give you the report of the Appeal Panel within **15 working days**. Again, if we think that the appeal may take longer, we will tell you and explain how far we have progressed and when the appeal is likely to be complete.

### **What will happen if you complain?**

28. At all stages, Touchstone will

- Listen to you.
- Respond in a reasonable amount of time. If there is to be a delay, Touchstone will write to you to explain when we expect the response to be ready.
- Explain what happened.
- Monitor the number of complaints and report them to the Board every six months.
- Organise a service user compliments and complaints audit panel to check that we are doing our job properly.

29. If Touchstone was wrong we will

- Apologise.
- Try to put things right. We will explain to you how we have done this.
- Review policies, procedures and practices and change them if needed.
- Ensure that what went wrong does not happen again.

## **When can't you complain?**

30. If Touchstone decides to discipline a member of staff as a result of your complaint you will not normally be told details of this action or the outcome.
31. Touchstone staff cannot complain about anything relating to their employment. Touchstone has other procedures and policies for staff who want to complain.
32. When the thing that you are complaining about is not in Touchstone's control and Touchstone cannot do anything to change it.
33. You cannot complain to Touchstone about another organisation or a service provided by another organisation. You should complain directly to that organisation.
34. If you want to complain about another service user, but their behaviour does **not** breach any of Touchstone's policies or their Occupancy Agreement. Instead, Touchstone will organise a resident's meeting or special meeting and a member of staff may attend and make suggestions.
35. If the complaint is so serious that the police or another external agency should investigate it. If this happens a Touchstone manager will explain to you why we are not investigating the complaint and why we have passed it to another agency.
36. Touchstone will not investigate vexatious complaints. A vexatious complaint can be:

when one person complains twice about something that is already being investigated  
when one person complains about the same/similar things repeatedly

One person can make more than one complaint at the same time if they are about different things.

## **Complaining about the Chief Executive**

37. A complaint about the Chief Executive can be made in writing or on the complaints form and should be sent to the Chair of the Board.

## **Complaining about the Board or a Board member**

38. You can make a complaint about the Board in writing or on the complaints form. You can send this to the Chair of the Board or to the Chief Executive who will pass your complaint to the Chair. You can make a complaint about the Chair by writing to the Deputy Chair of the Board. The Chief Executive will pass on your complaint.

## **Touchstone service user compliments and complaints panel**

39. Touchstone's compliments and complaints panel will make sure that we are following the correct procedures. This panel is made up of former and existing service users and will meet two to four times a year. (Please note this is different from the stage three Appeal Panel). Members of the panel have been trained on Touchstone's policy and also on the importance of confidentiality.

40. Appendix E gives information about the role of the Compliments and Complaints Panel.

41. All service user and staff names and addresses will be removed before any forms are seen by the panel to protect your identity and privacy. If you do not want to have your compliment or complaint reviewed by the panel, please tick the box on the compliments and complaints form.

42. If you would like to be a member of the service user compliments and complaints panel, please ask a Touchstone member of staff. You will receive training and payment from Touchstone.

43. Appendix F is a flow chart showing the 3 stages and who is involved at each.



## **Appendix A: Guidance for staff**

### **Introduction**

1. It is essential that Touchstone receives and processes complaints and compliments in an effective manner. Obtaining first hand information from service users is a positive opportunity for Touchstone. We can investigate service provision and reflect on how we can improve and what we do well. It is imperative that all staff follow these guidelines.

### **Complaints and compliments forms**

2. Complaints forms, compliments forms, the compliments and complaints policy and addressed envelopes must be displayed in an accessible location at all of Touchstone's sites.

### **Communicating the policy to service users**

3. When a service user first accesses Touchstone, a member of staff / volunteer must give details of the complaints and compliments policy and procedures. This information will usually be given during an initial interview or assessment. The service user should be told where the forms are located, the purpose of the policy and how to make a complaint or compliment.
4. Touchstone's initial assessment checklists include a prompt to discuss the compliments and complaints procedure. The staff member or volunteer responsible for this must sign the checklist to say this has been undertaken. The service user will also sign the form.
5. For service users who are tenants in a Touchstone property, their Tenant's Handbook also includes a section on compliments and complaints.

### **Reporting of complaints**

6. All stage one informal complaints must be logged in a complaints file by team managers. This includes details of the complaint, an

explanation of action taken, discussions with the service user and outcomes.

7. Managers must report all informal complaints and compliments to Senior Management Team on a quarterly basis including

- Detail of complaints and compliments
- Action taken
- Outcome
- Impact on policy and procedure

8. All stage two formal complaints are sent to the Chief Executive who keeps a full record of all correspondence and action taken.

9. The Senior Management Team prepares a six monthly report on all of the complaints and compliments for the Board. This includes:

- Number of complaints
- Any trends
- Outcome
- Impact on policy or procedure
- Number of appeals



## Appendix B: Compliment Form

### Guidance

- Thank you for taking the time to give compliments and thanks. Touchstone's Chief Executive and Board will be informed of your appreciation.
- You can ask someone else to help you complete this form.
- You can continue on a separate piece of paper.
- When you have completed the form, please write 'confidential' on the envelope and send it to

The Chief Executive  
Touchstone  
2-4 Middleton Crescent  
Leeds LS11 6JU

### Your details

Name.....

Address.....

Post code.....

Mobile number.....

Other phone number.....

Email address.....

Tick the words that describe you

Potential service user      Referrer      Other (please specify)

Current service user      Volunteer      .....

Review September 2016, CEO/ N4U / QCS

## Your compliment

Please describe why you want to compliment or thank us. Please describe what happened and give details such as names.

Please tick here if you do **not** want your compliment to be reviewed by the service user complaints and compliments panel

## Your signature (or your representative's signature)

Signature.....

Name and date.....

Representatives must have the agreement and support of the person making the compliment.

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**Please do not complete this part of the form. This is for Touchstone.**

Name of person recording compliment .....

Position.....

Signature.....

Date compliment received .....



## Appendix C: Complaint Form

- Please read Touchstone’s Compliments and Complaints Policy and the guidance notes before completing this form.
- You can ask someone else to help you. You can have a representative, advocate or spokesperson.
- You can continue on a separate piece of paper.
- When you have completed the form, please write ‘confidential’ on the envelope and send it to

The Chief Executive  
Touchstone  
2-4 Middleton Crescent  
Leeds LS11 6JU

### Your details

Name.....

Address.....

Post code.....

Mobile number.....

Other phone number.....

Email address.....

Tick the words that describe you

Potential service user      Referrer      Other (please specify)

Current service user      Volunteer      .....

## Your complaint

Please describe what you are complaining about. To help us investigate the complaint please give details such as the date, time, place, witnesses and names of people and other agencies involved.

How has this affected you?

What do you want Touchstone to do to resolve your complaint?

Please tick here if you do **not** want your complaint to be reviewed by the service user complaints and compliments panel

### **Your representative's details**

If you have a representative, advocate or a spokesperson who is assisting you, please give their details.

Name .....

Organisation .....

Address .....

Post code .....

Mobile number .....

Other phone number .....

Email address .....

**Your signature**

Signature.....

Name and date.....

**Your representative’s signature**

Signature.....

Name and date .....

Representatives must have the agreement and support of the person making the complaint.

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**Please do not complete this part of the form. This is for Touchstone.**

Name of person recording complaint .....

Position.....

Signature.....

Date complaint received .....

Acknowledgment letter to be sent by .....  
(This must be within five working days of receipt of complaint)

Full reply to be sent by .....  
(This must be within 15 working days of receipt of complaint)

Investigating officer .....

Tick which stage

One

Two

Three

## **Appendix E – Remit of the compliments and complaints panel**

### Remit

- 1) To ensure Complaints and Compliments are dealt with in accordance with Touchstone Policy and Procedures.
- 2) To look for trends in Complaints and Compliments as a means of addressing practice issues.
- 3) To make recommendations to CEO about improvements to practice particularly in relation to Complaints and Compliments.
- 4) Review the Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedures including all forms.

### Functionality

- 1) The Panel will meet 3 times per year to review all Complaints and Compliments received since the previous Panel meeting.
- 2) The panel will comprise 3 or 4 Service Users and a staff member as Facilitator.
- 3) All Service Users on the Panel will have completed Touchstone Complaints and Compliments training.
- 4) All Panel members will sign a Confidentiality Clause committing to not disclose any information received in the course of their involvement with the Panel. Any breach of this confidentiality will mean immediate withdrawal from the Panel.
- 5) The Facilitator will ensure the Panel members have copies of all Compliments and Complaints and the responses made by Touchstone.
- 6) The Panel has the right to make recommendations only. It does not have the power to enforce change. All Panel recommendations go directly to the CEO via the Panel Facilitator.
- 7) Complaints and Compliments Panel Training is conducted annually to refresh existing Panel members and enable new Service Users to become Panel members.
- 8) Panel members should normally stand down after two years service on the Panel.

Complaints Flow Chart

What	How	Who
<p>Stage 1 (Informal)</p> <p>↓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go to an office</li> <li>• Telephone</li> <li>• Email or write</li> <li>• Text us</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Worker</li> <li>• Or Team Manager</li> </ul>
<p>Stage 2 (Formal)</p> <p>↓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Complaints Form/telephone or text</li> <li>• Ask staff who will complete on your behalf</li> <li>• Ask someone else/another agency to complete on your behalf</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Executive will deal with or ask another Manager</li> </ul>
<p>Stage 3 (Appeal)</p> <p>↓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write to Chief Executive</li> <li>• Ask someone else to write (within 10 days of date on letter)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Executive</li> <li>• 2 Trustees</li> </ul>
<p><b>End of process</b></p>		