

Oxfordshire Mind

Complaints and Compliments Policy

July 2025

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Summary of main changes in this version:

Removes ‘concerns’ in an effort to give clarity that there is a single process for negative feedback of whatever severity.

Includes a section clarifying that this policy applies to Oxfordshire Mind activity carried out under the working name ‘Mind in Berkshire’.

Refers to Stages 3 and 4 as ‘appeals’ to offer clarity.

Includes an appendix setting out how staff without access to In-Form can ensure complaints (and compliments) are logged.

Includes an explanation of how anonymous feedback is handled, and encourages named feedback.

Advocacy – updated this to a generic reference to being able to include a friend, family member or other supporter in the process. Previous policy referred only to ‘advocacy services’. With the reduction in commissioned community advocacy services, many people would not now be able to access a formal advocacy service, although we would be happy to work with such services if people are eligible.

Information sources used:

Oxfordshire Mind Policy on Policy Management

Mind Policy Checklist – Compliments, Comments and Complaints:

<https://connectingminds.org.uk/resources/policy-checklist-compliments-comments-and-complaints/>

Mind Quality Mark Standards 2025-28:

<https://connectingminds.org.uk/resources/mqm-2025-2028-standards/>

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Involvement Policy
- Equity Diversity Inclusion & Equality Policy
- Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy
- Volunteering & Peer Support Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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THIS POLICY IS NOT TO BE USED BY STAFF WISHING TO RAISE CONCERNS ON THEIR OWN BEHALF: THEY SHOULD USE THE OXFORDSHIRE MIND GRIEVANCE POLICY

Introduction

Purpose:

Oxfordshire Mind works hard to provide high quality services to everyone we interact with. In order to do this, we need to be open to feedback from our volunteers, service users and members of the public about what we're doing well and where we need to improve.

This policy encourages people to make complaints (give any negative feedback) and to give compliments (positive feedback) so that we can continue to learn and improve. It also explains the process for how to share complaints and compliments, as well as any relevant investigation processes that follow the feedback shared.

This policy was developed with people who have Lived Experience of mental health challenges, and follows the principles of our Involvement Policy and our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equality (EDIE) Policy. It also recognises our data protection and confidentiality obligations, and meets the standards set out under the Mind Quality Mark (MQM) Standards.

Oxfordshire Mind uses the working name 'Mind in Berkshire' for some of its Berkshire activities, but Mind in Berkshire is not a separate legal entity and therefore this policy applies to Oxfordshire Mind activities carried out in Berkshire, which may be held out as Mind in Berkshire services.

The following principles guide Oxfordshire Mind's approach to handling compliments and complaints:

- Listening to people's experiences is a vital tool in measuring how well Oxfordshire Mind is providing services and how we can improve for the future.
- The process is fair, easy and transparent (we will always be honest, and be as open as possible about what's happening).
- The process is accessible to everyone, whatever their identity and experience.
- Making a complaint will not negatively affect the service that is being given to anyone making a complaint
- Complaints are dealt with efficiently, appropriately and are investigated as required within the agreed time.
- People who make complaints are treated with respect and courtesy, and receive appropriate support throughout the handling of the complaint.
- People who make complaints receive a timely and appropriate response, sharing the outcome of any investigation and what will happen next.
- Action is taken where necessary in the light of the outcome of the complaint. This might include an explanation, an apology and, if relevant

and appropriate, information on any action taken.

- It is very important that every effort is made to ensure anyone making a complaint understands the outcome of their complaint.
- We will keep information confidential, and share only what is necessary and with those who need to know. If there are safeguarding concerns either about the person making a complaint or another person, then we may need to share information with other agencies to keep people safe. In line with our safeguarding policies, we would aim to seek consent before doing this, and let people know we are doing this unless that would be unsafe or inappropriate.
- If someone makes a complaint or gives feedback anonymously then it may be difficult for us to carry out a full investigation, and we would not be able to share the outcome of that investigation as we would if we knew the source. For this reason, we encourage people to share their identity. However, anonymous complaints will be recorded and investigated as far as we are able.

If a staff member of Oxfordshire Mind wishes to raise an issue on their own behalf, they should follow the guidelines set out in the organisation's Grievance Policy rather than the Complaints and Compliments Policy.

Time limits to submit a complaint



Usually, we will only investigate complaints that are either:

- Made within six months of the event

or

- Made within six months of the person realising that they have a reason to make a complaint, as long as the event they are making a complaint about happened no more than twelve months ago

If an event complained about happened more than 6 months ago, it may be difficult for us to deliver a full inquiry. We will therefore encourage people to raise issues as soon as possible to ensure best possible investigation. In exceptional circumstances - for example gross misconduct or abuse - Oxfordshire Mind may

choose to investigate a historic complaint. The decision to do this will be made by a member of the Senior Management Team.

This policy (please see the sections from Stage One to Stage Four below) outlines the process which Oxfordshire Mind follows.

The principles of good complaint handling as defined by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) are: -

- Getting it right
- Being customer focused
- Being open and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Seeking continuous improvement

Definitions

When Oxfordshire Mind uses the words **complaint** and **compliment**, here's what we mean.

- All negative feedback is treated as a **complaint** and follows the complaints process. We no longer use the word **concern** within this policy, but it may appear in some historic documents as an alternative name for an informal or low level complaint.
- When people make a **complaint** to Oxfordshire Mind, it means that they are telling us that they are worried or uncomfortable about something at Oxfordshire Mind. They may be dissatisfied about something they have witnessed or experienced, because they feel that Oxfordshire Mind has:
 - Failed to provide a service
 - Failed to provide an acceptable standard of service,
 - Made a mistake in the way a service was provided
 - Failed to act appropriately
 - Been unfair in some way

Complaints and compliments are an important part of our learning, and can help improve Oxfordshire Mind's services for everyone. Previously, these have helped us to make changes to how we describe our services, to our staff training and induction, and to how we make our services more accessible.

All complaints will be logged (see Appendix B for staff who do not have access to the In-Form system) and follow the same process and progress:

1. Stage One is informal (see the Stage One section below for more information).
2. Stage Two will usually be carried out by a manager at Oxfordshire Mind.

3. Stage Three will usually be carried out by a member of Oxfordshire Mind's Senior Management Team.

4. Stage Four will be carried out by a member of Oxfordshire Mind's Board of Trustees.

Where a complaint is following one of the formal stages, it will be assigned for investigation by someone with sufficient seniority and distance from the individual / service complained about to ensure an objective review. The investigation will normally be internal, but in some circumstances, Oxfordshire Mind may decide to ask for an external review.

- When someone gives a **compliment**, they are sharing a positive comment with the organisation about an experience they have had with Oxfordshire Mind and how this has affected them. This compliment contains information that helps Oxfordshire Mind to understand what it is that people like or value when they connect with us, and why. Compliments help us to understand what we're doing well so that we can help even more people and grow the skills that we have.

All compliments will be logged (see Appendix B for staff who do not have access to the In-Form system).

We will keep a record of all compliments and complaints and share these regularly with our staff and volunteers, Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees.

[Support for those making complaints](#)

Public / service user facing information about this policy will include signposting information to aid people who feel their mental health is being negatively affected by the process and who may wish to seek additional support from Oxfordshire Mind or another organisation.

Public / service user facing information about this policy will include references to people being able to ask a friend, family member or support worker to accompany them to discussions about their complaint as an informal advocate. People may also use formal advocacy services, if they are able to access such a service in their area.

[Timescales](#)

The timescales for Oxfordshire Mind's complaints process at each stage are set out in flowcharts at Appendix A and detailed below.

Stage One (Informal)

The first stage of raising an issue should normally be for people to speak with or write to the person involved at Oxfordshire Mind or, in the case of volunteers, their Oxfordshire Mind line manager. We will do our best to address the worry or unhappiness through a conversation or by writing to the individual and letting them know what we have done or will do next, as a result of the person getting in touch with us.

If someone doesn't know who to contact, if they don't want to speak to the person connected with the complaint themselves, or if they want support to set out their complaint, then they should email: complaintshelpdesk@oxfordshiremind.org.uk or call 01865 263755 to leave a voice mail. (This number is a voice mail box only.)

A member of Oxfordshire Mind staff will **acknowledge** any complaints within **five working days** of receiving them, as well as logging the complaint at this stage.

So that the organisation can best address the complaint, people will be encouraged to provide a brief summary, be specific about what the complaint is, and provide further detail as necessary, including copies of any relevant communications.

After the complaint has been acknowledged, a staff member will undertake any further discussion or exploration of the issue as required and **reply** to the person who lodged the complaint within a further **10 working days**. This will usually be a staff member within the service where the complaint arose, and often the staff member who initially receives the complaint, but this may be passed into the service to look into if the person complaining has come through another route, such as the InfoLine or Complaints Helpdesk.

If the individual is not satisfied with the response at this stage, they can request the complaint be escalated to Stage Two – a formal complaint. Details on how to do this are at the start of the Stage Two section of this policy.

Stage Two: Formally registering a complaint

To log a complaint formally, this should be put in writing and either sent to:

The Complaints Helpdesk
Oxfordshire Mind
2 Kings Meadow
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0DP

or emailed to: complaintshelpdesk@oxfordshiremind.org.uk.

A complaint about the Chief Executive Officer or the Board should be marked for the attention of the Chair of Trustees, or for the attention of the Vice Chair of Trustees if the complaint is about the Chair.

If someone is unable to put the complaint in writing themselves, they can speak to an employee of Oxfordshire Mind and ask them to log the complaint, or leave a message with the Complaints Helpdesk on **01865 263755** and someone will contact the person to discuss logging the complaint in writing on their behalf.

All Stage Two complaints will be **acknowledged** within **five working days** of receipt, including a summary of the complaint and advice to the complainant that they may request changes to this summary within 28 days.

After 28 days, or confirmation that the person making the complaint does not wish to make any changes to the summary, whichever is sooner, the complaint will be assigned to a manager. This will be someone with sufficient seniority to come to a final decision about the issues being raised, as well as being able to consider matters objectively. The person making the complaint will be told who the investigating manager is at this point. The manager will carry out an investigation, and provide a **full written response** within **20 working days** from when the complaint is assigned to them.

Once the Stage Two investigation is complete, the matter is closed unless new and relevant information comes to light which would warrant re-opening the investigation, or if there are grounds for progressing to Stage Three which is an appeal. The Stage Two response should make this clear.

Stage Three

If the person complaining feels that the organisation's investigation was not properly carried out in line with this policy, then they can appeal the decision by asking for their complaint to be progressed to Stage Three. This means that the complaint investigation (at Stage Two) is reviewed – normally by a member of the Senior Management Team. The only grounds for progressing from Stage Two to Stage Three are that the Stage Two investigation was not properly carried out, e.g. failed to consider all relevant points, failed to include key evidence etc. A Stage Three review is not a re-investigation of matters properly considered at Stage Two.

To escalate or move the complaint on to Stage Three, the complainant must **request this in writing** within **10 working days** of being notified of the outcome of the Stage Two investigation. The request must be accompanied by an explanation as to why the individual is not satisfied with the investigation, and either sent to:

The Complaints Helpdesk
Oxfordshire Mind
2 Kings Meadow
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0DP

or emailed to: complaintshelpdesk@oxfordshiremind.org.uk

If the request for the Stage Two investigation to be reviewed is concerned with a complaint about the Chief Executive Officer or the Board, it should be marked for the attention of the Chair of Trustees, or for the attention of the Vice Chair of Trustees if the complaint is about the Chair.

If someone is unable to put the request in writing themselves, they can speak to an employee of Oxfordshire Mind and ask them to log the request or leave a message on **01865 263755** and someone will contact the person to discuss logging the request in writing on their behalf.

All Stage Three complaints will be **acknowledged** within **five working days** of receipt, including a summary of the complaint and reasons for requesting a review of the investigation, with advice to the complainant that they may request changes to this summary within 28 days.

After 28 days, or confirmation that the person making the complaint does not wish to make any changes to the summary, whichever is sooner, the complaint will be assigned to a member of the Senior Management Team. The person making the complaint will be notified which Senior Management Team Member will be reviewing the information and investigating further if required. The individual will receive a **full written response** within **20 working days** from the date of the Stage Three complaint being assigned.

If the individual believes the Stage Three has not been properly carried out in line with this policy, they can request the complaint is escalated to Stage Four, where it will be investigated by a member of the Board of Trustees

Stage Four

If, after the complaint investigation has been reviewed at Stage 3, the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the response, they can make a further appeal in the form of a request for further review by our Board of Trustees. A Stage Four review is not a re-investigation of matters properly considered at Stages Two or Three. The person requesting the escalation must set out why they feel the Stage Three review was inadequate, and not rely solely on being unhappy with the outcome as grounds for requesting a further review.

To escalate or move the complaint onto Stage Four, the person complaining must **request this in writing** within **10 working days** of being notified of the outcome of the Stage Three investigation, including an explanation as to why the person is not satisfied with investigations and reviews so far, and either sent to:

The Complaints Helpdesk
Oxfordshire Mind
2 Kings Meadow
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0DP

or emailed to: complaintshelpdesk@oxfordshiremind.org.uk

If the request for the Stage Three investigation to be reviewed is concerned with a complaint about the Chief Executive Officer or the Board, the request should be marked for the attention of the Chair of Trustees, or for the attention of the Vice Chair of Trustees if the complaint is about the Chair.

If someone is unable to put the request in writing themselves, they can speak to an employee of Oxfordshire Mind and ask them to log the request, or leave a message on **01865 263755** and someone will contact the person to discuss logging the request in writing on their behalf.

The complaint escalation to Stage Four will be **acknowledged** in writing within **five working days**. In the acknowledgment will be a summary of why the complaint has been escalated, with advice to the complainant that they may request changes to this summary within 28 days.

After 28 days, or confirmation that the person making the complaint does not wish to make any changes to the summary, whichever is sooner, a member of the Board of Trustees will be assigned to carry out a review of the Stage Two complaint investigation and Stage Three review, and the individual will receive a **full written response** within **30 working days** from the date the Stage Four complaint was assigned.

Learning

At whichever stage of the process a complaint is closed, the staff member logging the closure will be prompted to record any learning and nominate a person responsible for disseminating that. The learning may go beyond the specific episode or particular service named in the complaint.

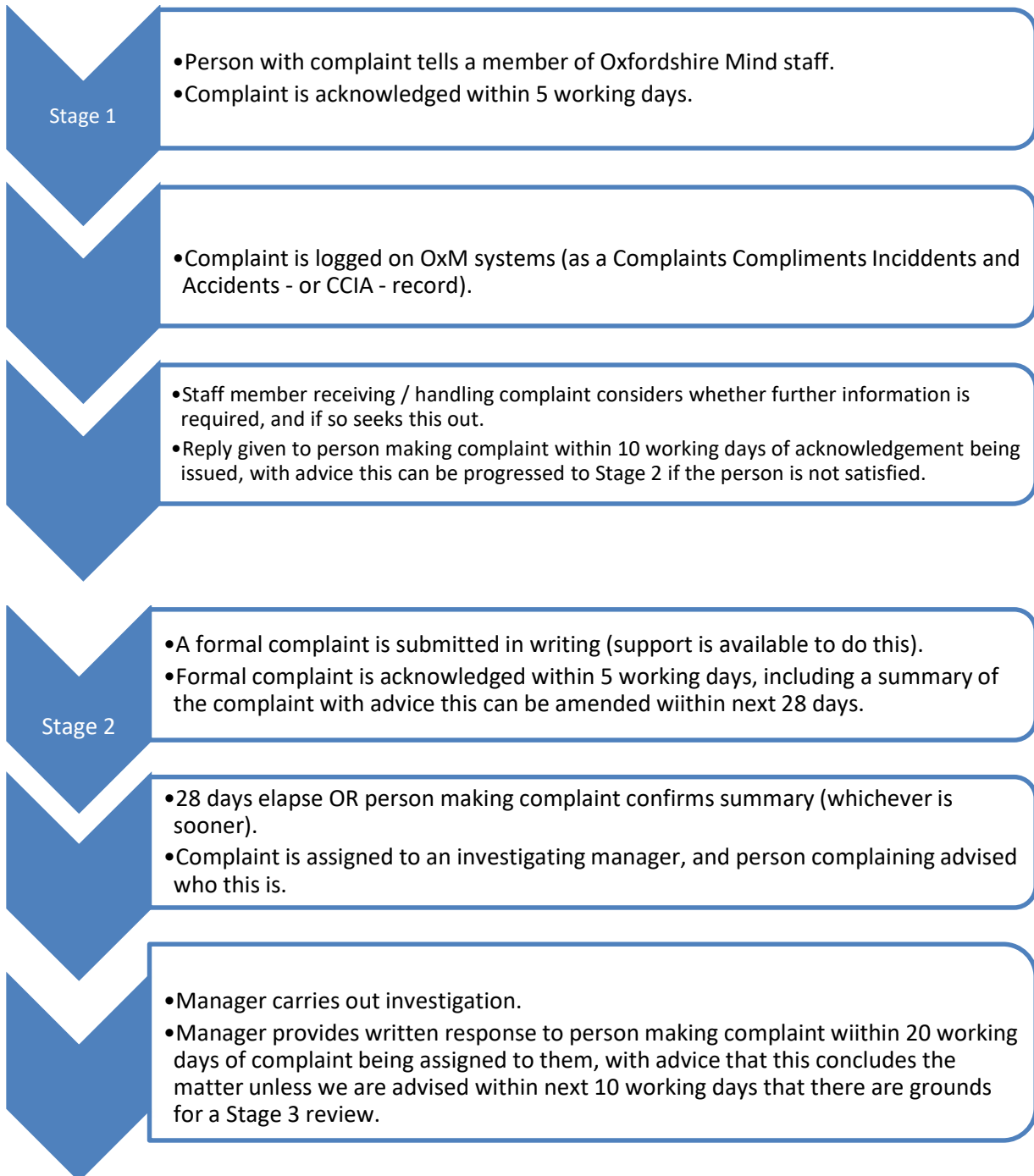
Any learning or actions agreed as part of investigating a complaint will always be shared with the relevant manager and team so that we can make sure any necessary changes are put into action.

Reports produced for the Senior Management Team and Trustees will highlight any trends and themes from and complaints, including action taken.

Advocacy

People raising a complaint are welcome to ask a friend, family member or support worker to accompany them to discussions about their complaint as an informal advocate. People may also use formal advocacy services if these are available to them. If a complaint is being made on behalf of a someone by an advocate, it must first be verified that the advocate has permission to speak from the person making the complaint, especially if confidential information is involved. Oxfordshire Mind will obtain consent from the person who has made the complaint before discussing the complaint with the advocate.

APPENDIX A: Complaints Flowchart



Stage 3

- A request for investigation review is submitted in writing (support is available to do this).
- Formal request is acknowledged within 5 working days, including a summary of the grounds for review with advice this can be amended within next 28 days.

- 28 days elapse OR person requesting review confirms summary (whichever is sooner).
- Complaint is assigned to an SMT member, and person complaining advised who this is.

- SMT member carries out review.
- SMT member provides written response to person requesting review within 20 working days of review being assigned, with advice that this concludes the matter unless we are advised within next 10 working days that there are grounds for a Stage 4 review.

Stage 4

- A request for investigation review is submitted in writing (support is available to do this).
- Formal request is acknowledged within 5 working days, including a summary of the grounds for review with advice this can be amended within next 28 days.

- 28 days elapse OR person requesting review confirms summary (whichever is sooner).
- Complaint is assigned to a member of the Board of Trustees, and person complaining advised who this is.

- Trustee carries out review.
- Trustee provides written response to person requesting review within 30 working days of review being assigned to them, with advice that this concludes the matter.

APPENDIX B - Points of contact for In-Form access

Many Oxfordshire Mind workers have access to the In-Form system and so will be able to record complaints or compliments (as CCIAs) directly. Within the Services areas of the charity, most team members have In-Form access and for team members who do not have access, including new starters awaiting training or allocation of a licence, seeking the assistance of their line manager or another colleague will be the most appropriate way to proceed.

The following may also be approached to create or update an In-Form record on behalf of a colleague who does not have access.

- Volunteers can approach their 'local manager' in the service where they volunteer or a member of the Volunteering and Peer Support Team at:
volunteering@oxfordshiremind.org.uk
- Staff in the Finance, HR or Development teams can approach the Data & Quality Team at:
data@oxfordshiremind.org.uk