



# Supporting People Complaints Policy

Wigan Department of Adult Services Document control		
Document title	Supporting People Complaints Policy	
Purpose	To describe the process for dealing with complaints within the Supporting People Programme in Wigan.	
Author	Supporting People Team	
Date of publication	13/12/06	
Valid until	01/01/08	
Owner/responsibility	Supporting People Commissioning Body	
Distribution	Supporting People Commissioning Body Support Providers Core Strategy Development Group SPkweb	
Version	Date	Comments
Version 1	30/06/06	
Version 2	04/10/06	Amendments made to version 1 following consultation with Customer Relations Unit and changes in legislation.
Version 3	01/12/06	Amendments made to version 2 prior to distribution for consultation.
Version 3	6/12/06	Agreed version 3 with amendment to include advocacy
Version 4	7/12/06	Amendments made to include advocacy
Version 4	7/12/06	Agreed by Core Strategy Development Group
Version 4	13/12/06	Agreed by Commissioning Body with amendment to include appeal against Commissioning Body decision
Version 5		Amendments made following Commissioning Body

## **Supporting People Dealing with complaints, comments and suggestions.**

- 1 Introduction/purpose of the procedure**
- 2 What is a complaint**
- 3 Who can make a complaint**
- 4 Underlying principles/philosophy**
- 5 The role of supporting people in dealing with complaints**
- 6 Types of complaint**
- 7 Handling complaints about Supporting People funded services**
- 8 Complainant agrees to complain to Provider**
- 9 Complainant requires support to make complaint or they wish to make an anonymous complaint**
- 10 Service user is dissatisfied with how the provider has dealt with the complaint and wants to have the matter investigated by Supporting People or the contracted service does not appear to be being provided.**
- 11 Complaints or concerns in relation to protection of vulnerable adults**
- 12 Complaints about the Supporting People Team**
- 13 Monitoring complaints**
- 14 Other ways to complain**

## **1 Introduction/purpose of the procedure**

- 1.1 The Supporting People programme offers vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment that enables greater independence. Therefore, the Supporting People Team is committed to using feedback from service users and wider stakeholders as a basis for assessing customer satisfaction and reviewing, shaping and improving the quality of services accordingly.
- 1.2 A range of methods are used to gain feedback. This includes the need for a clear and accessible approach to dealing with complaints.
- 1.3 This policy and procedure concerns complaints related to services funded by the Supporting People Programme and complaints made about the Supporting People Team.
- 1.4 The Supporting People Team in Wigan is part of the Department of Adult Services, consequently the Supporting People Team works within the Department's customer service policies and procedures.

## **2 What is a complaint**

- 2.1 As a working guide a complaint may be generally defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions, or apparent failings of a local authority's adults social services provision which requires a response.”

(The Local Authority Social Services complaints (England) regulations 2006. Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1681)

## **3 Who can make a complaint**

- 3.1 Anyone who receives, or thinks they should receive a service, can complain. Individuals can request others to act on their behalf and people with a significant interest in an Individual can also complain on behalf of that person.

## **4 Underlying Principles/philosophy**

- 4.1 Supporting People is a working partnership of local government, service users, service providers and stakeholders which aims to improve the quality of life for vulnerable people. Therefore the intention of any involvement by the Supporting People Team is to resolve issues through generating positive discussion and encouraging practical and reasonable resolution.
- 4.2 The Supporting People Programme in Wigan is seeking to ensure that service users are encouraged to provide feedback about the standard of their service through:
  - Support providers promoting their complaints policies.
  - Service users being aware that that they can complain directly to the SP Team if they are unhappy with the way in which their Provider has dealt with their complaint or they feel unable to complain to their provider.

## **5 The role of the Supporting People team in dealing with complaints**

- 5.1 Housing related support services are provided in line with the terms of contracts which exist between the Council and the support provider. Each provider must have an accessible complaints policy and must support its service users to use the policy on request. The complaints policy will be assessed as part of the monitoring, review and accreditation process against the standards set out in the Quality Assessment Framework (see appendix 1).
- 5.2 Where service users are dissatisfied with the standard of service they receive, they would, in most circumstances, be expected to use their providers complaints process.

The Supporting People team understands that there may be occasions when individuals are worried about sharing concerns with their provider as they are anxious about the possible effects of making a complaint. In such circumstances, the Supporting People Team will aim to reassure the individual that any complaint made should not affect where they live, or the quality of service that they receive.

- 5.3 Therefore, in most instances, any involvement by the Supporting People team in dealing with complaints will only be in an advisory or monitoring capacity. The nature and outcome of complaints received by Support Providers are monitored through the contract monitoring procedures.
- 5.4 However, there will be circumstances in which the Supporting People Team will be required to play a more active role which are outlined under Section 10 below.

## **6 Types of complaint**

- 6.1 For the purposes of this policy there are 2 types of complaint:
- Complaints about supporting people funded services
  - Complaints about the Supporting People Team

## **7 Handling Complaints about Supporting People funded services**

- 7.1 There are 2 types of Supporting People funded services:
- External - services provided by an external organisation contracted by Wigan Council Supporting People Team.
  - Internal – services provided directly by Wigan Council Department of Adult Services.

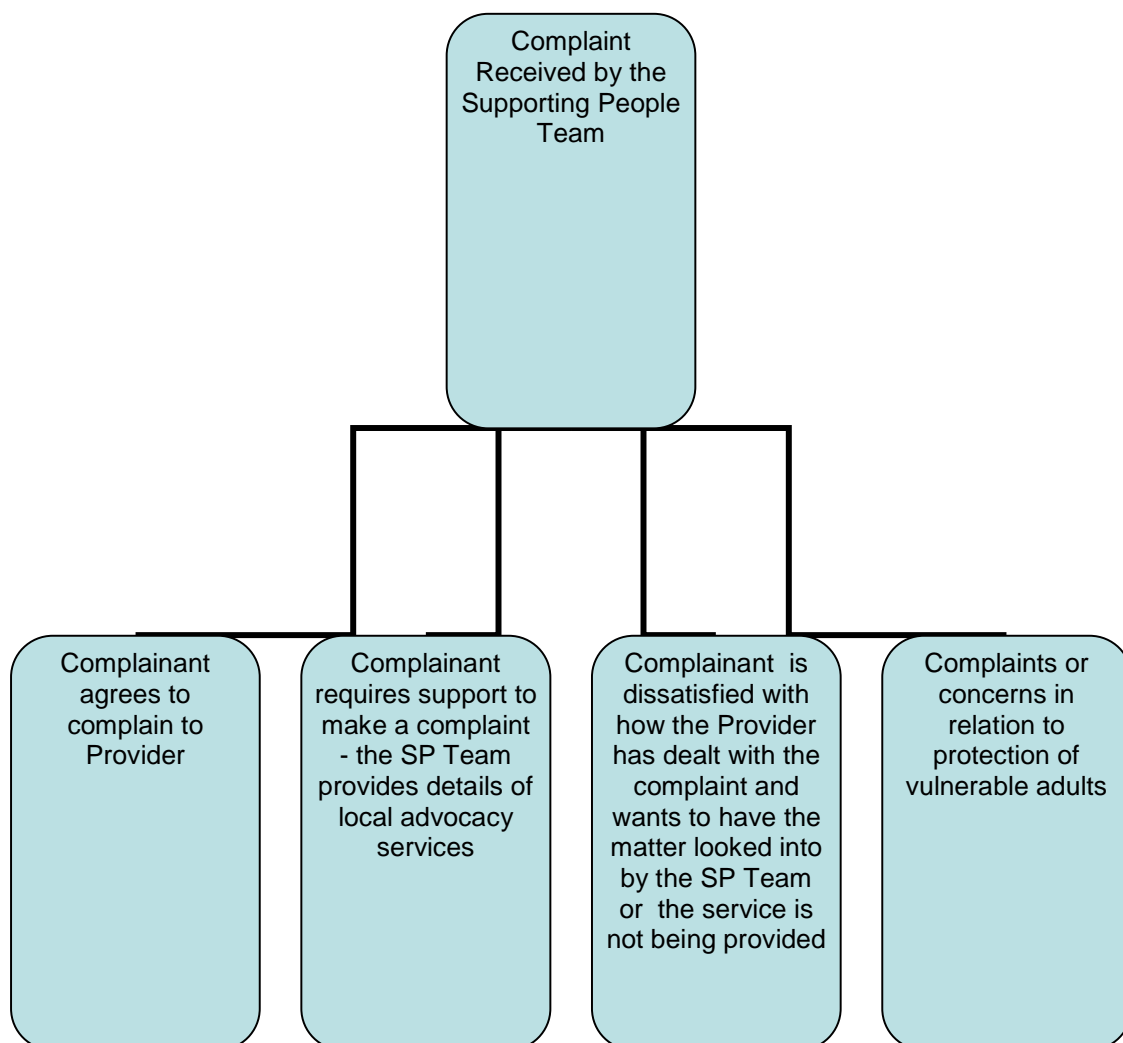
Complaints about all services will be dealt with in the same way.

- 7.2 When service users contact the Supporting People team with concerns regarding their service, staff will take brief details and then, in most circumstances, advise the service user to discuss this matter with their provider. However, where this is felt not to be appropriate by the Supporting

People Team, or the service user, there are likely to be three other possible courses of action:

- The Supporting People Team gives the service user details of an advocacy service which they can contact for support to make a complaint to the Provider. SP Team will provide any assistance which is required to access the advocacy service.
- The Supporting People Team becomes actively involved in looking into and resolving the complaint, consequently, such complaints are logged under the Adult Services Complaints Policy
- The service user is advised to contact Central Duty Team where there are concerns regarding abuse

7.3 These possible courses of action are shown in the diagram below:



The action taken under each of the above possible options is outlined below

## **8 Complainant agrees to complain to Provider**

Where the Supporting People Team has, after hearing brief details about the issue of concern, advised the service user to contact the Provider and the service user has agreed to do so, the following action will be taken by the SP Team:

- A record of the discussion will be kept by the Supporting People team.
- There will be no further action from the Supporting People Team apart from the review of anonymised complaints as part of the contract monitoring process.

## **9 Complainant requires support to make complaint or they wish to make an anonymous complaint**

9.1 Where the service user feels that they need support to make a complaint, the Supporting People team will provide the service with details of an advocacy service and assistance to access this service as required. The details of the advice and assistance given will be recorded.

9.2 In the event that a service user wishes to make an anonymous complaint, the Supporting People Team will pass the details to the appropriate Manager and ask them to investigate and then notify the Supporting People Team of the outcome. The Supporting People Team will aim to protect the complainants anonymity however cannot offer any guarantees as any information shared in relation to the complaint may reveal the identity of the complainant.

## **10 Service user is dissatisfied with how the provider has dealt with the complaint and wants to have the matter investigated by Supporting People or the contracted service does not appear to be being provided.**

10.1 There are a number of different potential circumstance where the SP Team would need to play a more active role in resolving the complaint. These include the following:

- The Provider does not follow its complaints policy or fails to support its service users in making complaints. - in such circumstances the SP Team would be responsible for reviewing the handling of the complaint and working with the Provider to resolve the matter.
- The nature of the complaint indicates that the Supporting People funding received by the organisation is not being used in the intended manner or the Provider is not providing the contracted service – in such circumstances the Supporting People Team is likely to make their own enquires to determine if the Provider is in breach of the terms of their contract. If this issue is drawn to the SP Team's notice as a result of a complaint from an individual then the matter will be logged under the Adult Services Complaints Policy, however if the matter is identified through contract monitoring procedures then the issue will still be investigated but not recorded as a complaint.

- 10.2 In the event of any of the circumstances listed under 10.1 occurring, the details would be discussed with the Department of Adult Services Customer Relations Unit with a view to deciding how the Adult Services complaints policy should be applied. As there are different stages to the complaints policy (informal; formal and complaints panel review), the Customer Relations Unit will advise as to whether the complaint should be treated as informal or formal.

Where it has been decided that the matter will be treated as an informal complaint the Supporting People team will be responsible for working with the service user and the service provider to resolve the issue. In the event that it is considered appropriate for the matter to be considered as a formal complaint then the Customer Relations Unit will be responsible for investigating the matter.

## **11 Complaints or concerns in relation to protection of vulnerable adults**

- 11.1 Where service users approach the SP team with concerns about abuse they will be advised to contact the Central Duty Team. If required, the SP team will support the service user to do so. Wigan Council's joint protocol for recognition, reporting and investigation of the abuse of vulnerable adults ("Protecting Vulnerable Adults in Wigan – April 2005") outlines the action which will be taken.
- 11.2 The Supporting people team will also consider the nature of the problems and the response of the Provider as part of the contract monitoring process.

## **12 Complaints about the Supporting People Team**

- 12.1 The Supporting People Team aims to give the best possible service in all areas of work, but accepts that there may be occasions when things go wrong. When this happens it is important that the Supporting People Team are informed so that things can be put right. Complaints provide the team with valuable feedback about work undertaken.
- 12.2 Complaints in relation to Supporting People should be made to the Supporting People team or to the Department of Adult Services Customer Relations Unit.

## **13 Complaints about the Commissioning Body**

- 13.1 As complaints about the conduct of the Commissioning Body are likely to relate to procurement and contracting issues, the process to be followed when making and responding to complaints will be included within the procurement and contracting guidance.

## **14 Monitoring Complaints**

- 14.1 The Supporting People Team will monitor the number and the type of complaints made against each Provider.
- 14.2 All providers will be required to submit information in relation to complaints made about the service through contacts monitoring procedures. Concerns will also be discussed at formal contract monitoring meetings.

- 14.3 The Supporting People Team will want to monitor the outcome of complaints to see if there has been a positive change to the service (i.e. if something needed changing as a result of the issues raised by the complainant, has this been done).
- 14.4 Complaints about the Supporting People Team will be monitored and used when reviewing practises, policies and procedures.

## **15 Other ways to complain**

- 15.1 Where the Provider is a Registered Social Landlord, service users should also be informed of their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman at any point. However the Ombudsman will normally expect that the complainant has exhausted provider/council complaints procedures before they become involved unless there are specific reasons to the contrary.

Housing Ombudsman  
Norman House  
105 – 109 Strand  
London WC2 0AA  
Tel: 0207 836 3630 or 0845 712 5973

- 15.2 Complaints about Councils and other bodies can also be made to the Local Government Ombudsman who investigate complaints about most council matters including Housing, Planning, Education and Social Services. However the Ombudsman will normally expect that the complainant has exhausted provider/council complaints procedures before they become involved unless there are specific reasons to the contrary.

Local Government Ombudsman  
Beverley House  
17 Shipton Road  
York  
YO30 5FZ  
Tel: 0845 6021983

[www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

- 15.3 In some services care and housing related support are provided together by the same organisation. The regulation and inspection of care services is normally undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection, 11 Floor, West point, 501 Chester Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 9HU. Although this agency will not investigate complaints, they can be contacted if a person is concerned that a service is not meeting the regulations under which it is approved or concerns are such that CSCI needs to consider them in the context of whether or not the service should be allowed to continue. CSCI inspect all regulated services as required and reports on inspections can be obtained from <http://www.csci.org.uk/>

## **Other useful documents**

Protecting Vulnerable Adults in Wigan - Wigan Council joint protocol for recognition, reporting and investigation of the abuse of vulnerable adults (April 2005).  
Department of Health, Learning from complaints, Social Services complaints procedures for Adults (July 2006).

## Appendix 1

### Complaints and the Quality Assessment Framework

#### The Supporting People Team expect as a minimum standard (level C) that:

- There is a written complaints procedure that makes clear:
  - whom to complain to in the first instance;
  - what the organisation will do;
  - How to escalate a complaint and appeal in the case of dissatisfaction with the outcome.
- Staff are able to describe the procedure.
- Action is taken in response to individual complaints.

The majority of services have met level C or above of the Quality assessment framework and will be working towards the next level of assessment.

#### The standards expected in level B are as follows:

- The language and presentation of the procedure promotes understanding by the majority of service users
- Service users understand the procedure.
- Outcomes of complaints are fed back to complainants
- The organisation and its staff see complaints as a positive feedback tool.

#### The standards expected in level A are as follows:

- Service users and carers are encouraged and empowered to use the complaints procedure.
- Complaints are proactively used in planning and shaping services with the involvement of service users and carers.
- The complaints procedure specifically addresses complaints from external individuals or organisations
- Reviews of the complaints procedure involve service users and carers.

**Appendix 2  
Wigan Supporting People Team  
Complaints Recording Form**

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Contact Number:</b>	

<b>Date Complaint received</b>	
<b>Received by</b>	
<b>Date reported to Customer Relations Unit</b>	

<b>Summary of Complaint</b>

<b>Summary of action taken</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Update</b>	<b>Name</b>

<b>Outcome/Recommendations</b>

<b>Further action Necessary?</b> <b>Yes/No</b>
If yes please give details