

# Customer Care Guidance 1.0

### Version control and sign off

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### Sign off

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## Role of the Customer Care team

1. The role of the Customer Care team is to handle all feedback from our service users at any time through the customer journey. We are also responsible for handling any requests for a review<sup>1</sup> that a service user may make after we have made a decision on a complaint.
2. We encourage our service users to contact the Customer Care team by telephone as we want to build a more personal relationship with them. Customers can also contact us by email, online or in writing.
3. Our contact details are 0345 015 4033 (option 3), 0300 061 4076, and [feedbackaboutus@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:feedbackaboutus@ombudsman.org.uk). On our website there is an online form for review requests and a general contact form for any other feedback that people can complete.
4. Once contact is made with the Customer Care team they will consider the information provided to see what action they can take to try and assist the service user. The contact will fall into one of the following categories:
  - Positive feedback
  - Complaint about our service on an ongoing case
  - Complaint about our service on a completed case
  - Complaint about our methodology
  - Complaint about our decision
  - Post-review correspondence
  - General comments on PHSO
5. The information below explains what to do with each of these types of contact.

### Positive feedback

6. Any contact which gives a positive view of our service or decision should be passed to the Customer Care team. Emails or notes of telephone calls should be forwarded to [feedbackaboutus@ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:feedbackaboutus@ombudsman.org.uk). The team Business Support Officer will add them to the Meridio folder. Similarly please scan hard copy positive feedback and send to the same e-mail address

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<sup>1</sup> A review request is where we are asked to look again at a decision because a customer is unhappy with it.

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## **Complaint about our service on an ongoing case**

7. A complaint about our service is where a customer expresses dissatisfaction about our contact and relationship with them. This covers such areas as delay, rudeness, not returning contact when asked etc.
8. If a complaint is raised regarding an ongoing case that is currently being worked on by a case owner then a decision needs to be made about who is best to handle this, the Customer Care team or the Manager. The Customer Care Manager should discuss and agree this with the case owner's Manager. The outcome should be notified to the Customer Care Business Support Officer
9. If a customer asks for somebody else to deal with their case, then that must be directed to the Line Manager, as should initial concerns about attitude, rudeness, lack of updates etc. If the Manager has attempted to resolve the concerns and the service user is still unhappy, then this can be passed to the Customer Care team who will deal with this as a priority. We would expect to see that the Manager has spoken with the service user and tried to address their complaint.
10. Customer Care will always handle complaints about a delay in allocating cases to an investigator if this cannot be resolved by the Allocations Team.
11. The Customer Care Officer should complete an analysis of the complaint using the review form on Visualfiles. This analysis should:
  - explain briefly what the original complaint to PHSO was about;
  - explain why the service user is unhappy with the service we have provided and what they want as a remedy;
  - explain what evidence we have taken into account (we should usually always speak to the staff member and to the service user if necessary);
  - say what our proposed decision is, if we are recommending redress and how we are to explain this to the service user.
12. The decision on the complaint will be signed off by the Customer Care Manager.

## **Complaint about our service on a completed case**

13. These types of cases will be handled by the Customer Care team.
14. The Customer Care Officer should complete an analysis of the complaint using the review form on Visualfiles. This analysis should:
  - explain briefly what the substance of the complaint was;
  - explain why the service user is unhappy with the service we have provided and what they want as a remedy;

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- explain what evidence we have taken into account (we should usually always speak to the staff member and to the service user if necessary);
- say what our proposed decision is, if we are recommending redress and how we are to explain this to the service user.

15. The decision on the complaint will be signed off by the Customer Care Manager

16. It should be noted that there will be overlap between service and methodology complaints and so care should be taken to distinguish between them.

### **Complaint about our methodology**

17. These are complaints about how the assessment or investigation was (or is being) carried out. This will include such things as not being spoken to in the course of the investigation, disputing the clinical advice etc. If a complaint is made about an ongoing investigation then these will be treated like a service complaint, with the Customer Care Manager discussing with the relevant case owner's Manager (see paragraphs 8-9 above). Complaints about closed investigations will follow the process below.

18. The Customer Care Officer should complete an analysis of the complaint using the review form on Visualfiles. This analysis should:

- explain what the issue being complained about is,
- explain what did happen, what should have happened (using casework manuals etc. for reference) and identify any difference,
- explain the reasons, if known, for any difference.
- explain whether we appear to have acted correctly and whether the issue being complained about appears to cast doubt on our decision
- say what the proposed decision is.

19. The analysis will be passed to the Customer Care Manager for agreement, who will then forward the case to the Ombudsman's Casework Team (OCWT). OCWT will decide if a review is to be carried out. OCWT may also be asked to provide advice to support a decision that we acted correctly.

20. The case will stay with OCWT if a review is to be carried out, or will be returned to Customer Care to explain to the service user why a review is not appropriate in this case.

### **Complaint about our decision**

21. These are complaints about a decision we have reached. For example, this could be about whether to investigate, whether to uphold or the amount/type of redress decided on etc.

22. A review will only be considered where the service user can show that:
- Our decision was based on evidence that contained inaccurate facts.
  - They have new and relevant information that was not previously available and which might change our decision.
  - We overlooked or misunderstood parts of the complaint or did not take account of relevant information, which could change our decision.
23. The Customer Care Officer should complete an analysis of the complaint using the review form on Visualfiles. This analysis should:
- explain briefly what the substance of the complaint was;
  - explain why the service user is unhappy with the decision and the evidence they have provided;
  - analyse the complaint against the relevant review criteria (see paragraph 22); and
  - say what our proposed decision is.
24. The review request form should be completed and submitted to the Customer Care Manager, who will decide whether to pass this to OCWT for a review.
25. OCWT will then decide whether to review the case. If they do not feel a review is needed then they will explain why and the Customer Care Team will explain this to the service user. If they decide to carry out a review, the case will remain with OCWT who will complete the review and inform the service user of the outcome.

### **Post Review Correspondence**

26. Any correspondence that is received after a review has been completed (or we have declined to review), should be read and any questions answered. If the correspondence adds nothing new to the case then a brief letter should be sent explaining that we won't be taking any further action. A history item on Visualfiles should also be added showing what consideration has been given so there is an audit trail.

### **General Feedback on PHSO**

27. Anything else that is commented on about PHSO should be discussed with the Customer Care Manager.

### **Process and Timescales**

28. All written and electronic feedback will be acknowledged upon receipt.
29. Upon receipt of feedback the Customer Care Team have 5 working days to make a decision whether to propose to review the case, and to send that to

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OCWT. OCWT will let the Customer Care Team know their decision within 10 working days, allowing the Customer Care Team a further 5 working days to communicate this to the service user. Cases that do not need to go to OCWT should be completed in 20 working days.

30. All cases should be logged on the Customer Care Officer's individual spreadsheet and this should be kept regularly updated as the case progresses. The outcome and our decision should also be captured here.