

## LEICESTERSHIRE AIDS SUPPORT SERVICES

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

October 2008

#### **What to do if you are not happy with our service.**

Whilst our aim is to 'get it right' first time every time we provide a service, we also know that there may be times when our service users or anyone else who has contact with LASS may feel that we have not done so. This is why your feedback is so important to us. While it is great to receive feedback which shows us what is working well, we also need to know if things are could be improved and, if so, what we can do to make things better. We welcome feedback at any time and will endeavour to take appropriate action based on your feedback. You may provide this feedback in a number of ways; following discussion with staff, completing our feedback forms, evaluation of delivery and completing questionnaires and surveys.

There may be times when you have evidence that we have not provided the services we should be and have not responded to your feedback or given you a reason. We hope this won't happen but for this reason, we have a formal complaints procedure and are committed to dealing with all complaints that we receive. If you do want to complain, we will do everything we can to sort out your complaint. The following procedure explains what you need to do to if you have a formal complaint and how we will handle it.

#### **How to make a formal complaint**

If you are a service user and wish to make a complaint, please contact the Direct Services Manager. If your complaint is about the Direct Services Manager please contact the Chief Executive Officer.

If you are not a service user – e.g. a volunteer, an external organisation or anyone else, who may have contact with LASS – and wish to make a complaint, please contact the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

We need you to put your complaint in writing. This is so that we do not overlook or misunderstand anything. If this may be difficult for you, please see the section below on "getting help with making a complaint".

#### **Where to send your complaint**

LASS  
The Michael Wood Centre  
53 Regent Road  
Leicester  
LE1 6YF

Mark the envelope with 'confidential' and the name of the person you wish to deal with your complaint.

#### **Getting help with making a complaint**

If you need any help with making your complaint, whether at the time you are thinking about making a complaint or when you have done so, you can contact the Leicester Mediation Service address: Epic House, Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 3SG and telephone: 0116 253 2900 or the Citizen's Advice Bureau on Bishop Street. They will help you with your complaint at any stage of the procedure.

Please note that you will not have to pay for these services, they are free.

## Dealing with your complaint

At each stage of the procedure, we will:

- **Send** you a letter confirming that we have received your complaint, let you know who will be dealing with it and when you will receive a response. We will do this in the timescales shown below.
- **Investigate** your complaint fully. It is possible that we may need some further information from you before we can make a decision about your complaint. If so, we will write to you and ask for this. If possible, we would like you to reply as quickly as you can although we do understand that you may not be able to do so for a number of reasons – e.g. you are ill, on holiday or need help to do so.
- **Respond** to your complaint. You will receive a letter from the person or people who have been dealing with your complaint confirming what decision they have made and any action that LASS may take because of it. We will also tell you about what you can do if you are not happy with our decision.

### Timescales

- **Five working days** – to confirm that we have received your complaint or (in the case of stages 2 and 3), your letter confirming that you wish to take your complaint to the next stage.
- **20 working days** – to provide a response at stages 1 and 2. If we feel that we may not be able to meet our deadline for responding to your complaint, we will let you know, tell you why and provide you with a new deadline which will be as close to the previous one as we can reasonably make it.
- **20 working days** – to provide a response at stage 3 if you do not wish to attend the Board of Trustees meeting. If you do wish to attend, then we will let you know at the meeting when you can expect to receive a response.

### Who will handle your complaint?

#### Stage 1

This will normally be the Direct Services Manager (if you are a service user) or the CEO of LASS (in any other case). It may also be both. If we feel however that your complaint concerns the way LASS is run or organised or anything else which has to do with LASS as a whole, then the Chair of the Board of Trustees or the Deputy Chair will deal with your complaint.

We very much hope that we can deal with your concerns at this point but if you are not happy with our decision or the way we have dealt with your complaint, then you can take it further.

#### Stage 2

The Chair of the Board of Trustees or the Deputy Chair together with another Trustee (“the Review Panel”) will review your complaint, the investigation we undertook at the first stage and the response you received. If you have raised any further issues – for example, the way we dealt with your complaint – they will also investigate these.

If you are a service user, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will also ask someone who is independent of LASS to be part of the Review Panel. This is likely to be someone from one of our funders but we will let you know who this will be.

We very much hope that we can sort out your complaint at this stage but if not, then there is one further stage you can go through.

#### Stage 3

The Board of Trustees will review your complaint. **Please note that our response at the end of this stage of the procedure will be our final one.**

At this stage, you have a choice. You are very welcome to come along to a meeting of the Board to discuss your complaint with them. However, if you would prefer not to do so, then the Board of Trustees will review your complaint, the investigation we undertook at the first stage, any

investigation we undertook at the second stage, any further issues you may have raised and our responses to your complaint.

If you would like to discuss your complaint with the Board of Trustees, then the Chair of the Board will arrange this. They will let you know when this meeting will take place but will also make sure that they give you enough notice of the date of the meeting so that you can make arrangements to attend it.

You are welcome to bring someone with you to the meeting – a partner, relative or friend. You can also ask an independent organisation to help.

If you (or any person attending with you) have a disability or any special needs that we do not already know about, please let us know. It is important for us to make sure, where we reasonably can, that we make arrangements to cater for this.

At the meeting, the Board of Trustees will discuss your complaint with you. They will also look at the investigation we undertook at the first stage, any investigation we undertook at the second stage, any other issues you have raised and our responses to your complaint.

The Board of Trustees may ask you some questions if they need to find out more about what happened or they want to be sure they have understood everything.

When the meeting has finished, the Trustees will want some time to discuss your complaint before making a decision. This means that the Board of Trustees are unlikely to be able to let you know their decision on the same day as the meeting. However, they will tell you when you can expect to receive a letter from them confirming their decision.

**What you need to do if you are not happy with our decision**

You will see that the complaints procedure is in three stages. Stage 1 is for when you first make your complaint. After that there are two more stages for you to use if you feel that we have not sorted out your complaint.

If you do want to take your complaint further, please write to the Chair of the Board of Trustees telling them why within **five working** days of receiving our response. If you are not able to reply within five working days – e.g. because you are ill, on holiday or need help with doing so – please do so as soon as you possibly can.

If you are at stage 3, you will also need to tell us if you would like to attend the Board meeting to discuss your complaint.

**Your feedback**

We would like to hear from you with any thoughts you may have about our complaints procedure or using it. Please let us know what works or would work well for you and what you would like to see changed, as it is important to us that the procedure is clear and easy to use.

If you have any questions or comments on this procedure, please contact the CEO of LASS.

LASS Document Control		
<b>Approved by:</b>		
<b>Signature:</b>		
<b>Board Responsibility:</b>		
<b>Review Date:</b>	November 2011	