No.32 Complaints Policy

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2	Reviewed	23/6/25
3	Layout amended to align with the structure of all policies and reference to data protection complaints and how we use AI in this process added.	9/11/2026

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1. Introduction

The Lowdown is committed to providing high quality, accessible and respectful service to service users, employees, volunteers and others who engage with the Charity.

The Charity values all feedback, both positive and constructive, as this helps us to review, improve and develop the way we work and deliver our services. Positive feedback helps us recognise good practice, while concerns or complaints can help identify areas where improvements may be needed.

The Lowdown recognises that there may be occasions where individuals are dissatisfied with the service they have received, the support provided or interactions with members of the Charity. Where concerns are raised, the Charity is committed to listening, responding appropriately and seeking to resolve matters fairly, sensitively and as promptly as reasonably practicable.

Complaints will be taken seriously and handled consistently, confidentially and without discrimination.

Purpose
This policy is intended for concerns or complaints raised by service users, members of the public, partner organisations or others engaging with the Charity's services.

Concerns raised by employees relating to their employment, working conditions or workplace relationships should normally be addressed under the Charity's Grievance Policy.

Scope
This policy applies to complaints or concerns raised by service users, members of the public, partner organisations, caregivers, parents or guardians and others engaging with or affected by the Charity's services or activities.

The policy covers complaints relating to the standard of service provided, the conduct of individuals acting on behalf of the Charity or concerns about how services have been delivered.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Charity Responsibilities
The Lowdown Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Charity delivers services in line with appropriate standards and responds appropriately to feedback, concerns and complaints.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for overseeing the effective implementation of this policy and ensuring that complaints are managed fairly, sensitively and consistently.

Staff Responsibilities
Employees are expected to respond to concerns or complaints professionally, sensitively, and respectfully.

Complaints should be taken seriously and viewed as an opportunity to review and improve services where appropriate. Employees should avoid responding defensively and should aim to support a constructive and fair process.

Where possible, concerns should be directed to the most appropriate employee or manager. If this is not immediately possible, employees should:

- listen to the concern or complaint appropriately
- provide information about the Charity's Complaints Policy where relevant
- record the concern or complaint appropriately
- obtain relevant contact details where further follow-up may be required

Where a complaint relates directly to an employee or work, they have been involved in, they should refer the matter to an appropriate manager or another suitable person to ensure the complaint is handled fairly and objectively.

Volunteer Responsibilities
Volunteers are not expected to manage or investigate formal or informal complaints on behalf of the Charity.

Where a volunteer receives a concern, complaint or feedback relating to the Charity's services, they should respond politely and sensitively and direct the individual to the appropriate member of staff or line manager.

Volunteers should take concerns seriously and ensure that relevant information is passed on appropriately, while recognising that responsibility for managing complaints rests with authorised employees or managers.

3. Eligibility

Complaints may be raised by any individual or organisation engaging with, receiving services from, or otherwise affected by the Charity's activities. This may include:

- service users or their representatives
- parents, caregivers or guardians where appropriate
- members of the public
- partner organisations or external agencies
- funders, stakeholders or community representatives

Employees, Volunteers, and Trustees who wish to raise concerns relating to their employment, volunteering or working relationships should normally do so under the Charity's Grievance Policy or other relevant internal procedures.

The Charity will not normally respond to anonymous complaints where there is insufficient information to investigate the concern, or to complaints that are abusive, threatening, vexatious or unreasonably persistent.

4. Informal Complaints

The Charity aims to resolve concerns informally wherever possible and encourages individuals to raise issues at the earliest opportunity.

Informal complaints are usually raised verbally, either in person or by telephone, but may also be made by email or in writing.

Concerns will normally be addressed by the most appropriate employee or manager, who will seek to listen to the concerns raised, discuss the matter with the complainant where appropriate and attempt to reach a fair and reasonable resolution.

In some cases, further enquiries or investigation may be required. Where this is necessary, the complainant will be informed of the next steps and any expected timescales. The Charity will aim to resolve informal complaints as promptly as reasonably practicable and normally within 3 weeks, unless there are exceptional circumstances that cause a delay.

Employees and volunteers should make line managers aware of informal complaints where appropriate, particularly where concerns cannot be resolved immediately or may require further review.

A record of informal complaints and their outcome should be maintained in accordance with the Charity's procedures to support learning, service improvement and consistency.

Individuals may choose to raise a formal complaint at any stage of the process.

5. Formal Complaints

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, or where the individual wishes to make a formal complaint from the outset, complaints should normally be submitted in writing and include details of the concerns raised.

Formal complaints should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of The Lowdown. Where an individual is unable to submit their complaint in writing, the Charity will provide reasonable support to help record the complaint appropriately.

The complaint should include, where possible:

- the nature of the complaint
- relevant dates or details
- the impact of the issue
- the outcome being sought

The Charity will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing, normally within 7 days and will advise the complainant of the next steps and expected timescales.

Formal complaints will normally be investigated by an appropriate member of The Lowdown's management team. If the complaint relates to the Chief Executive Officer, an appropriate Trustee or other appointed person will manage the complaint.

The Charity will aim to investigate and respond to formal complaints as promptly as reasonably practicable and normally within 3 weeks, unless the matter is particularly complex or there are exceptional circumstances causing delay. Where delays occur, the complainant will be kept informed where possible.

The outcome of the complaint will normally be confirmed to the complainant in writing.

6. If the Complainant is not Satisfied with the Response

If a complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of their formal complaint, they may request a further review by writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, outlining the reasons for their continued concerns.

Where an individual is unable to submit their concerns in writing, the Charity will provide reasonable support to help record the request appropriately.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees, or another appropriate person where necessary, will review the complaint and any previous findings before deciding whether any further investigation or action is appropriate.

The Charity will aim to provide a final response as promptly as reasonably practicable and will normally confirm the outcome in writing.

Records of formal complaints, reviews, and outcomes will be maintained securely in accordance with the Charity's procedures and applicable data protection requirements.

7. Data Protection Complaints

Please see our Data Protection Policy for the process and timelines for managing these types of complaints.

8. Use of Artificial intelligence (AI)

The Lowdown may use approved AI-enabled tools to support administrative aspects of the complaints process, such as organising or summarising information. AI will not be used as the sole means of investigating a complaint, assessing evidence, or determining the outcome. Any use of AI will be subject to appropriate human oversight.

9. How The Lowdown Learns from Complaints and Compliments

The Lowdown values feedback, complaints, and compliments as important opportunities to review and improve the quality of its services and working practices.

Themes, concerns and learning points arising from complaints and feedback may be discussed at appropriate meetings to help inform service development, improve practice and support continuous improvement.

The Board of Trustees will receive appropriate information relating to complaints and compliments to support oversight, governance and organisational learning, while maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.

10. Feeding Back on The Lowdown Service

The Lowdown welcomes feedback from service users, partner organisations, and others engaging with the Charity's services.

Feedback may be provided in a number of ways, including:

- speaking directly with employees or volunteers
- surveys or feedback forms
- compliments, comments, concerns or suggestions shared with the Charity

Feedback, both positive and constructive, helps the Charity review, improve and develop its services and ways of working. Information gathered may be used to support service planning, quality improvement and organisational learning.

11. Contact Details

Complaints, concerns or feedback can be raised using the contact details below:
Address:
The Lowdown
3 Kingswell Street,
Northampton,
NN1 1PP

Tel: 01604 634385
Email: info@thelowdownnorthampton.co.uk
Website:www.thelowdown.info

Formal complaints should normally be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer unless otherwise advised.

Where a complainant requires additional support to access the complaints process, the Charity will seek to provide reasonable assistance where possible.

12. Related Policies

Data Protection Policy

Privacy Notice

Grievance Policy