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**Complaints policy**

## Purpose of this policy

Individuals and organisations have the right to express their views about Healthwatch Sutton’s performance and the manner in which it discharges its responsibilities.

Anyone directly affected by the way in which HWS has carried out its functions may make a complaint under HWS’s complaints policy.

We will treat both concerns and complaints in the same way.

We will review this policy on a regular basis.

## Statement

Any person can make a complaint about the following:

* An employee, volunteer, trustee or member of Healthwatch Sutton
* An independent worker commissioned by Healthwatch Sutton

The complaint may be made about the conduct of the person(s) above.

The complaint may be made about the conduct of the organisation.

## How to raise a concern or make a complaint about Healthwatch Sutton

It is best to make your complaint as soon as possible after the event, while it is fresh in your mind.

**Raising an issue informally**  
In the first instance, we would encourage you to raise a concern, or complaint, or to provide feedback on our service informally. Providing information or correcting misunderstanding or misconceptions at this early stage may enable the issue to be successfully resolved quickly.

**Making an official complaint**  
If the concern or complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, then you should notify us via email, letter or via a telephone conversation with a member of staff and say you are making an official complaint.

Healthwatch Sutton will acknowledge the concern/complaint in writing (or in the complainants preferred method of communication) within 3 working days.

**Resolving the complaint**  
If the complaint is not resolved within a mutually agreed time, we will organise a meeting between the complainant and someone from HWS – an appointed employee, the HWS Chief Executive or the Chair of HWS. The meeting will be held within 15 working days of establishing the nature of the concern/complaint. Exceptionally, if further time is needed, where possible this will be agreed with you.

The discussion and plans for action will be recorded and a copy given to the you.

**If you are not happy with the outcome, you can appeal to the Healthwatch Sutton board**  
The Chief Executive of HWS will review all concerns/complaints. If you are not happy with the outcome you will be able to appeal within 14 days of receiving the decision.

The concern/complaint will then be referred to the next Healthwatch Sutton Board meeting. If a meeting is not due within 20 days, a special Board meeting will be held within that time. You have the right to attend the meeting to give your point of view, but not be present when the decision is reached.

You will be informed of the decision after the meeting in writing.

**If you are unhappy with the board’s decision, you can appeal to the officer who manages our funding from Sutton Council**  
If you are still not satisfied, you can take your concern/complaint to the Contract Manager for Healthwatch Sutton within Together for Sutton, the network of advice and information agencies funded by Sutton Council. Our Contract Manager is Kate Lawman and her email address is [**kate@communityactionsutton.org.uk**](mailto:kate@communityactionsutton.org.uk). You should do this within 14 days of receiving the decision of the HWS Board meeting, otherwise the complaint will be closed.

**If you are still not happy, you can appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman**

**­**You may also subsequently take your concern/complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (<http://www.lgo.org.uk/>).

## Notes

* At all stages, you have the right to be represented by a person of your choice. You must let Healthwatch Sutton know in advance that someone is representing you, and in what capacity.
* Should the complaint involve misconduct by an employee or volunteer, then the disciplinary procedure may be started at any stage. Should this procedure begin, then the complaints procedure will wait for the outcome of the disciplinary proceedings.