



Think Ahead Comments, Concerns, Compliments and Complaints Policy and procedures

Introduction

At Think Ahead, we are committed to doing the best we can through our programmes to improve mental health services for those who access them, and those who work in them. We welcome feedback, both positive and negative, because it helps us to develop and improve in all areas of our work.

We recognise there are times when we might get things wrong or make mistakes, and we want to ensure we have a culture of continuous improvement so that we are always learning and developing. Your comments, concerns, compliments and complaints help us to achieve this.

This policy outlines how we handle comments, concerns, compliments, and complaints.

Who this policy is for

This policy is for people who want to make a comment, raise a concern, give a compliment or make a complaint to Think Ahead. This may include members of the public, or people who have had contact with Think Ahead – for example, applicants to our programmes, service users, alumni and members of staff at partner organisations. There is a separate complaints policy for participants who are currently on the programme (please find this on the Programme Portal).

Our commitment when dealing with complaints

We make the following commitments when dealing with complaints:

- We will promptly acknowledge your complaint and seek to resolve it in a timely manner.
- We will ensure that your complaint is properly investigated by the appropriate people.
- We will take steps to maintain the confidentiality of your personal information. We will only share information about the complaint with those who need to see it as part of the investigation.
- We will treat you fairly. Making a complaint will not harm or prejudice the service you receive from Think Ahead.
- We will use all complaints constructively to help us to improve our work and increase our impact.

Providing a comment or compliment to Think Ahead

We welcome comments and compliments, as these enable us to understand and learn from what's working well, and to provide feedback to those involved in our organisation. If you would like to pass on a comment or compliment, you can either contact the relevant person directly (if you are already in contact with them), or you can submit a message on our contact us page: <https://thinkahead.org/contact-us/>.

Raising a concern with Think Ahead

How we define a concern

A concern may be defined as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. A concern is different to a complaint in that it may not be specific to a particular experience or dissatisfaction with standards of service of action, but it is equally important that concerns raised are considered and responded to at the earliest possible stage. Think Ahead takes concerns raised very seriously and will make every effort to resolve them as quickly as possible.

If you wish to raise a concern, please contact the relevant member of staff directly in the first instance or submit a message on our contact us page: <https://thinkahead.org/contact-us/>. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views and refer you to the relevant manager in the team.

Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the relevant manager will attempt to resolve the issue through Stage 1 of the complaints procedure outlined below.

Making a complaint to Think Ahead

How we define a complaint

We consider a complaint to be an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service, actions, or lack of action by Think Ahead, our staff members or anyone else directly involved in the delivery of our work.

How to make a complaint

Complaints should be made within three months of the incident occurring, wherever possible. In some cases, we may be able to respond to an older complaint, but this decision is made at the discretion of Think Ahead, on a case-by-case basis.

If you would like to make a complaint to Think Ahead, please contact us in writing by emailing complaints@thinkahead.org. Please clearly outline the nature of your complaint and include any information that you think is relevant to help us to investigate.

If you require any additional support in order to make your complaint, please let us know by email or by telephone on 0203 4044 486 and we will work with you to provide support and make reasonable adjustments to our complaints process.

What to expect when you make a complaint

We will let you know that we have received your complaint within three working days of receiving your email.

Stage 1: your complaint will be looked into by a manager in the department or team concerned. We will usually aim to provide a full response within 10 working days. If you do not feel that your complaint has been resolved, you can request that it is moved to Stage 2, in writing and within 10 working days of the date of response.

Stage 2: your complaint will be investigated by someone not directly involved with the department or team you are raising a complaint about, and we will usually aim to provide a full response within 20 working days. We will let you know if we need more information from you, and if we need more time than the usual 20 days. If your complaint is complex – for example, if it involves one of our partner organisations or covers a complex issue – then we may need longer to conduct our investigation. We will let you know if this is the case and will keep you informed about when to expect our response.

If your complaint is regarding a senior member of staff, we will ensure that it is investigated by another senior member of staff. If it is regarding the Chief Executive, the complaint will be investigated by a member of our Board of Trustees.

We may not be able to resolve your complaint if it is not directly related to Think Ahead – for example, if it is related to one of our partner organisations. In this case, we will explain within 10 working days why we can't investigate the complaint directly and will let you know of any action we are able to take (for example, we may be able to pass your complaint on to the relevant person at the partner organisation).

When we are unable to respond to a complaint

There are certain circumstances when we may choose not to respond to a complaint – these include (but are not limited to): where someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that we have already responded to; where the person making the complaint is being abusive or offensive in their correspondence; where the complaint has been made anonymously (although we may treat this as a concern); or where the complaint has been sent to us and other organisations as part of a bulk email.

Appealing a complaint response

We take complaints very seriously, and we hope to resolve them with our first response. However, if you are not satisfied with our response to your complaint at Stage 2, you have the option to appeal.

If you would like to appeal, please let us know within three weeks of receiving our response. Please explain why you are not satisfied and provide us with any additional information that you think is relevant.

The appeal will be led by the Chief Executive or a senior member of staff who did not lead the initial investigation, who will provide you with a response, usually within 20 working days. We will keep you informed if we need more time. If the appeal is about a complaint related to the Chief Executive, it will be led by a member of the Board of Trustees.

Our appeal response is our final response.

You also have the option to take your complaint to a statutory body – for example the Charity Commission. More information about making a complaint with the Charity Commission can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>.

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