

## Complaints Policy

Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH)  
94-96 Fairfield Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WR  
<https://mash.org.uk>  
Registered Charity Number 1051754

### Introduction

Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH) strives to provide services to a very high standard as expected by all our service users. If we fail to do this we want to know about it. This will enable us not only to deal with the specific problem, but also to prevent it happening again.

We encourage complaints, comments and compliments as feedback upon which we can develop and improve the services and functions we deliver. We will strive to respond to all of these in a positive manner, dealing with complaints in the manner set out in this document.

MASH views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person [or organisation] that has made the complaint. This document sets out our policy regarding complaints and the procedures we will follow when we receive a complaint from a service user, an organisation, or member of the public. It does not address complaints regarding staffing or volunteering issues or recruitment and selection, which are covered by separate procedures.

This document describes the process MASH will take when a complaint is raised. This includes the process for recording, investigating and responding to complaints, as well as the appeals process.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at MASH knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

### Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of MASH or its services.

## Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any individual, volunteer or organisation who has a legitimate interest in MASH, including the general public if something is perceived to be improper. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

## Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following all relevant data protection requirements.

## Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of trustees of MASH.

## Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

## Complaints Procedure

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to MASH, 94-96 Fairfield Street, Manchester, M1 2WR by e-mail at [admin@mash.org.uk](mailto:admin@mash.org.uk). Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 0800 183 0499 or in person to any of MASH'S staff or trustees at the same address as above or at any of our events. If the complainant is not able to put their complaint in writing they will be offered an option to verbally provide the complaint. MASH will endeavour to make necessary adjustments to support complainants in the reporting and recording of complaints.

## Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have, such as social media.

- Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded
- The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:
  - Write down the facts of the complaint
  - Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
  - Note down the relationship of the complainant to MASH, e.g. donor, volunteer, sponsor
  - Inform the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
  - Tell the complainant what will happen next and an estimate of how long it will take
  - Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words

## Resolving Complaints

### Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the MASH Chief Executive within five business days.

On receiving the complaint, the Chief Executive records it in the Complaints Log. If it has not already been resolved, they delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

Where the complaint is against the Chief Executive the same procedure should be followed, but with a Trustee taking on the role and function of the investigator at all stages. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within five working days.

The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

### Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. The complainant may choose to work with a third party representative at this stage and throughout the process. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Board of Trustees. The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Board of Trustees may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully

completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

## External Stage

As MASH is a registered charity, the complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Charity Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

## Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about a Chair or trustee should not also have the Chair and/or trustee involved as a person leading a Stage Two review.

## Exceptional circumstances

Where a complainant pursues staff and/or volunteers outside the scope of the law i.e. threatening behaviour, actual or physical bodily harm etc. this shall normally render their complaint invalid and it shall not be acted upon in any way.

If the behaviour of a complainant towards staff or volunteers is sufficient to warrant involving the police this behaviour shall normally render their complaint invalid and it will not be acted upon.

Complainants whom engage in behaviour that could be regarded as “vexatious litigation” in a legal context shall not have their complaints dealt with. The Chief Executive shall be responsible for identifying complainants acting as such and shall submit this information to the Senior Leadership Team and this information shall be recorded for future reference, using a Complaints Log. If at any point in the future, an individual or organisation recorded in this way makes another complaint, consideration shall be given to whether or not to disregard that complaint.

The decision to dismiss complaints without investigation should not be taken lightly or liberally and must be escalated to the Senior Leadership Team before a decision is made. A record of disregarded complaints must be kept for reporting to the Board of Trustees. Anonymous complaints will not be investigated.

## Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Next review date December 2023