



1. Purpose

- 1.1** To ensure that Laurel Homecare Ltd has an effective system in place to manage complaints, suggestions and compliments.
- 1.2** To ensure that Laurel Homecare Ltd complies with any legal requirements, regulations, guidelines and best practice.
- 1.3** To support Laurel Homecare Ltd in meeting the following Key Lines of Enquiry:

Key Question	Key Lines of Enquiry
CARING	C2: How does the service support people to express their views and be actively involved in making decisions about their care, support and treatment as far as possible?
RESPONSIVE	R2: How are people's concerns and complaints listened and responded to and used to improve the quality of care?
SAFE	S1: How do systems, processes and practices keep people safe and safeguarded from abuse?

1.4 To meet the legal requirements of the regulated activities that {Laurel Homecare Ltd} is registered to provide:

- Compensations Act 2006
- The Care Act 2014
- The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice
- Data Protection Act 2018



2. Scope

- 2.1** The following roles may be affected by this policy:
- All staff
- 2.2** The following Clients may be affected by this policy:
- Clients
- 2.3** The following stakeholders may be affected by this policy:
- Family
 - Advocates
 - Representatives
 - Commissioners
 - External health professionals
 - Local Authority
 - NHS



3. Objectives

- 3.1** To improve the quality of the Client's experience.
- 3.2** To ensure that all complaints and suggestions are promptly addressed, resolved and shared within the agreed timescales to ensure that lessons are learned and that the learning improves service quality and delivery.



4. Policy

4.1 Complaints

- Laurel Homecare Ltd understands complaints to be an expression of dissatisfaction requiring a response, communicated verbally, electronically, or in writing. Complaints may be made by any Client, their family or advocate acting on their behalf, with their consent or in their best interests
- Laurel Homecare Ltd takes complaints seriously. We will aim to put things right that have gone wrong and learn lessons to avoid the problem happening again. This policy sets out the framework for how Laurel Homecare Ltd will achieve this. The detail of how Laurel Homecare Ltd will do this will be found in the associated procedures
- Laurel Homecare Ltd will comply with legislation, national guidelines, regulation and best practice when managing complaints and suggestions. A systematic approach will be taken with all aspects of complaints and suggestions
- Complaints made or concerns raised by staff will be addressed via the grievance process if the complaint or concern relates to them individually, or via the Whistleblowing procedure where a protected disclosure is made
- Laurel Homecare Ltd understands its statutory obligations in respect of the Duty of Candour and will ensure it follows the agreed policy and procedure

4.2 Laurel Homecare Ltd will ensure that its complaints and compliments process is fair and transparent and does not discriminate directly or indirectly because of the following:

- Age
- Being or becoming a transsexual/transgender person
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The complainant will feel free to complain without fear of reprisal and will be treated with courtesy, respect and compassion. Laurel Homecare Ltd will ensure that the process for how to make a complaint and the feedback given to the complainant are provided in a way that meets the Accessible Information Standard and are in a format that the Client can understand.

4.3 Seeking Views and Engaging with Clients

Laurel Homecare Ltd will seek out opportunities to obtain feedback from Clients and stakeholders. Laurel Homecare Ltd will act with sensitivity, integrity and professionalism by treating individuals who do complain or make a suggestion with compassion, courtesy and respect. Laurel Homecare Ltd will protect the Client's right to confidentiality. Laurel Homecare Ltd will ensure that alternative methods of communication are available so that the complaints and suggestions procedures are accessible for Clients who experience difficulties with communication or whose first language is not English.

Staff will undertake training on how to manage complaints in line with their roles and responsibilities.

4.4 Laurel Homecare Ltd understands that it can be difficult to separate a complaint from a concern and, therefore, Laurel Homecare Ltd will follow this policy when there is any dissatisfaction with the service.

4.5 A full record will be held of all complaints received regardless of the level of seriousness and means of communication. This approach allows an open and transparent culture around raising concerns in the earliest stage to allow resolution. A record of the complaint will also be held in the Client's Care file and will be reported in line with contractual or regulatory requirements.

4.6 Safeguarding Concerns

Where a complaint or concern is raised that relates to a Client being harmed or likely to be harmed, Laurel Homecare Ltd will follow its Safeguarding Policy and Procedures in addition to the complaints procedures, seeking advice and guidance from the Somerset County Council Safeguarding Adults Team and escalating concerns in line with Somerset County Council procedure. Laurel Homecare Ltd will also notify the CQC in

line with its statutory duty.

4.7 Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff

It is acknowledged that all staff working within Laurel Homecare Ltd may be presented with an individual wishing to raise a concern or complaint at any time. Therefore, staff need to be able to manage this in a sensitive, structured and timely manner. In order to do this, staff will:

- Be trained on induction and as a routine measure to ensure knowledge is embedded and refreshed around the complaints procedure
- Have access to the complaints procedure
- Be provided with the opportunity to reflect and learn from complaints as a means of developing and driving quality care
- Appreciate that any feedback from Clients or their representatives that is of concern needs immediate resolution, where possible, to their satisfaction. Care Plans will be updated to reflect the planned changes to care and the Registered Manager informed of the feedback. Failing to do this may result in a complaint
- Be clearly advised that, when presented with a complaint, swift escalation to management is necessary and that purposefully withholding or concealing concerns expressed by Clients or their representatives may lead to disciplinary action

Management Team at Laurel Homecare Ltd

- The management team at Laurel Homecare Ltd is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy, regulations, improvement planning and for having arrangements in place to provide relevant reports and information regarding complaints
- Sarah Hall is the main point of contact for the receipt, investigation and management of complaints within Laurel Homecare Ltd. However, this may be delegated to a senior member of staff within Laurel Homecare Ltd who holds the experience, knowledge and competence to investigate and manage complaints
- Laurel Homecare Ltd will ensure the procedure for raising a complaint is accessible and displayed prominently in Laurel Homecare Ltd, on the website of Laurel Homecare Ltd and in Client information and guides. Alternative languages and formats will be available on request

4.8 Compliments and Suggestions

Laurel Homecare Ltd welcomes compliments and suggestions and recognises their importance in celebrating and recognising the success of its service and opportunities for improvement. We will engage with a wide range of stakeholders in addition to Clients to support service development and improvement. We will share feedback with our staff.

4.9 One Complaint, One Response

Laurel Homecare Ltd will follow the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman best practice](#) and, where Clients are receiving services from more than one organisation, it will ensure they can make a complaint to anyone and be provided with a single response following a joint investigation.



5. Procedure

5.1 Raising Complaints

A complaint can be received by Laurel Homecare Ltd either verbally or in writing and can be made by:

- Clients
- Someone acting on behalf of a Client and with their written consent, e.g. an advocate, relative, Member of Parliament
- Someone acting on behalf of a Client who is unable to represent his or her own interests, provided this does not conflict with the Client's right to confidentiality or a previously expressed wish of the Client

Laurel Homecare Ltd will ensure that Clients are given information on how to make a complaint and the process once a complaint has been made, including any agreed timescales.

5.2 Time Limits for Submitting a Complaint

Complaints should be submitted within 12 months of the incident or concern arising.

The time limit, however, can and should be waived, if:

- It is still practical and possible to investigate the complaint (the records still exist and the individuals concerned are still available to be questioned, etc.) and
- The complainant can demonstrate reasonable cause for delay in making the complaint

It is at the discretion of the manager of the service if the time limit can be set aside.

5.3 Complaints Procedure:

Step 1

When a complaint is raised to staff, staff will make an effort to resolve it immediately to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Step 2

Staff will apologise for the fact that there was the need to complain in the first instance and explain the complaints process as described in the procedure steps.

Step 3

Staff will report the complaint to the most senior member of staff on duty and the complaint will be logged.

Step 4

Formal acknowledgement of all complaints received (whether verbal or written) will be sent within 3 working days to the complainant. This could be via letter or email. Laurel Homecare Ltd will have a local system in place to manage out-of-hours and weekend complaints received.

The acknowledgement will include:

- An invitation to meet and discuss the complaint
- Who will be investigating the complaint
- How the investigation will be handled - the response should state what the investigation will be focused on
- A time limit for the investigation to be concluded. This should be 28 days. However, some cases may take longer and the complainant will be made aware of this
- The complaints procedure and contact details of bodies that can be accessed in the event of dissatisfaction with the outcome of the investigation

Step 5

Following a full investigation, a response letter will be sent and this will include the following:

- A summary of the issue from the complainant's point of view
- Details of the evidence and sources consulted in order to investigate the issue fully and fairly
- A presentation of the findings for each issue clearly and concisely described
- A conclusion, stating clearly whether the issue is "upheld", "partially upheld" or "not upheld"; unless it is ineligible, in which case the reason for this will be given, e.g. out of time or out of jurisdiction
- An explanation of the outcome and whether any remedial action or learning points arise from the investigation of that issue
- An apology where the issue is upheld and shortcomings or failings have been found
- The complainant's rights if not satisfied with the outcome to refer to The Local Government and Social

Care Ombudsman

- A signature from the responsible individual or sent by email in their name

Step 6

The complaint will be closed once confirmation has been received that there is satisfaction with the outcome. In the event of dissatisfaction, Laurel Homecare Ltd will support the complainant to access further support (refer to section 5.6)

5.4 The Complaints Log

A record will be held of all complaints raised and contain the following information:

- Each complaint received
- Subject matter and outcome
- Details of any reason for delay where investigations took longer than the agreed response period
- The date the report of outcome was sent to the complainant

Where complaints relate to a Client, a copy of the complaint will be held in their care records so that the Client can reflect on the recommendations.

Where complaints are raised by telephone, the log will include the date and time of the call and this will be followed up with written confirmation of the areas discussed.

Where a complaint indicates the potential abuse of Clients, safeguarding policies will be followed as per local authority expectation and necessary notifications made to the regulatory body. Where Care is commissioned by Somerset County Council, their reporting procedure for notifying them of complaints will be followed.

Where complaints are to be shared as part of learning, the complaint will be anonymised so there is no identifiable Client information.

5.5 Investigations

All investigations will be managed by using the following approach:

- Investigating the fact
- Assessing evidence
- Review of records
- Interviewing those involved

Where necessary, advice and support will be sourced via senior managers within the organisation. The complaint must be investigated by a member of staff with the knowledge, experience and seniority to undertake the investigation robustly.

Confidentiality of information will be considered at all times and staff will adhere to the confidentiality policies and relevant codes of practice.

If an investigation of a complaint results in disciplinary action against staff within Laurel Homecare Ltd, the complaint will continue to its conclusion. The complainant will be informed that the investigation has led to the disciplinary process, but the details of the outcome or ongoing investigation will remain confidential.

5.6 Unresolved Complaints

There are many bodies that can support with, or will need to be informed of, unresolved complaints and it is important to note that, due to the current coronavirus pandemic, helpline opening times and ways of communicating may vary across each organisation:

1. The Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission will not investigate complaints on behalf of individuals but does like to be informed of any concerns regarding a care provider, such as poor care that has been seen or experienced. Information given to the CQC will help to prevent others from going through the same experience and can be fed back via:

- Website www.cqc.org.uk
- Email enquiries@cqc.org.uk
- Address: Care Quality Commission (CQC)
National Correspondence
Citygate, Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne NE14PA
Tel: 03000 616161
Fax: 03000 616171

2. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (for those Clients that are funded by local authority-funded social services care or self-funded)

Individuals have the right to raise their complaint with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. This is a free service and individuals can contact their Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman via:

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry CV4 0EH
Tel: 0300 061 0614

Email: advice@lgo.org.uk

Website: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/>

Complaint form: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/complaint-form>

Individuals must be advised that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman will not investigate the complaint until the provider has had the opportunity to respond and resolve the matter in the first instance.

3. Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (for Clients that are NHS funded)

Individuals have the right to raise a concern about a service that is NHS funded. This is a free service and individuals can make contact via:

- Telephone 0345 0154033
- Email phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk
- Website www.ombudsman.org.uk
- Address: Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, Millbank Tower, 30 Millbank, Westminster, London, SW1P 4QP

Sarah Hall can also signpost individuals to Healthwatch and the local Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS).

4. Clinical Commissioning Groups

Individuals can make a complaint about a health service they are receiving or have received and can discuss this with the commissioner of the service. Local contact details can be located [here](#).

5. Local Authority Complaints Teams

Individuals have the right to raise concerns and complaints about adult social care regardless of whether or not they pay for their own Care or if the Council funds it. Individuals can make a complaint about organisations who provide services on the Council's behalf. The contact details for the Local Authority Complaints Team are:

Adult Social Care Commissioning - 0300 123 2224

6. Professional Bodies

If a complaint involves the serious misconduct of a healthcare professional, their relevant professional body can be informed and this is determined on an individual case basis in discussion with the Registered Manager.

For any external bodies managing complaints, Laurel Homecare Ltd will work with the external body providing information as requested, within any agreed timescales expected.

5.7 Compliments

Receiving compliments is an opportunity to celebrate and recognise success. Laurel Homecare Ltd will ensure that:

- All compliments are shared with staff and displayed in a public area to highlight good practice
- Compliments are anonymised or permission is sought before displaying
- Numbers of compliments received are logged as part of a quality assurance programme
- Verbal positive feedback from Clients and relatives is also deemed a compliment and will be recorded and shared with colleagues
- Compliments form a core agenda item at staff, Client and relative meetings

5.8 Suggestions

Suggestions can be made verbally or in writing and generally are in response to seeking a means of changing practice for the better.

- Suggestions are not complaints, but in some circumstances, if they are not considered or actioned, they could lead to a complaint
- When suggestions are raised in meetings or as part of a conversation, these will be documented and

then outcomes of such suggestions recorded to show consideration

- Staff will be encouraged to share their suggestions, or suggestions received by relatives and Clients, with the Registered Manager
- Sarah Hall at Laurel Homecare Ltd will consider implementing a suggestions system to encourage comments from Clients, staff and visitors

5.9 Audit and Evaluation

Laurel Homecare Ltd will monitor, review and analyse all information received about the service as a means of continuously reviewing performance, quality and safety.

Laurel Homecare Ltd will also:

- Share themes and trends with Care Workers working for Laurel Homecare Ltd
- Ensure that staff are trained to deal with complaints and understand the procedure for managing complaints

5.10 Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be investigated in the same way as named complaints. They will be logged and any corrective action necessary will be taken and also logged.

5.11 One Complaint, One Response

Where more than one organisation is involved in the Client's Care, they, or their representative, will be able to complain to any of them and Laurel Homecare Ltd will contact the other organisations, carry out a joint investigation and provide a single joint response. Clients must not have to contact each organisation separately.

If someone complains and Laurel Homecare Ltd is not responsible for the care or service complained about, rather than turning the complainant away, Laurel Homecare Ltd will share the concerns with the correct organisation(s). It will be necessary to obtain the individual's permission to do this. If the person prefers that their complaint is not shared with another organisation (or organisations), Laurel Homecare Ltd will signpost them to the right organisation instead and provide the person with their contact details.

Laurel Homecare Ltd will follow [LGO guidance](#) for managing this.

5.12 All efforts will be made by Sarah Hall to resolve all complaints within Laurel Homecare Ltd. If a Client does not wish to raise a complaint directly to management within Laurel Homecare Ltd, in the first instance, staff will try and sensitively establish their reasons why and aim to resolve and address any concerns that present.

Decisions to raise complaints outside of Laurel Homecare Ltd will be fully respected and the Client will be supported to raise their complaint with the commissioner of the service or to seek the support of an independent advocate or representative. Staff can also refer to section 5.6 for a further list of organisations that can be accessed.

Clients can also be signposted to [Citizens advice guidance](#).

5.13 Vexatious Complaints

Occasionally, Laurel Homecare Ltd may receive complaints that are vexatious in that they cause considerable disruption to the work at Laurel Homecare Ltd, disproportionate cost and time to handle, and impact the wellbeing of staff (because of the way the complaint is made or because of its repetitive nature). Laurel Homecare Ltd will ensure that it meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled Clients. In some circumstances, Clients may have a disability that makes it difficult for them to either express themselves or communicate clearly and/or appropriately. Where there is an indication that this may be the case, Laurel Homecare Ltd will consider the needs and circumstances of the Client or complainant in the first instance and use this information to inform any decisions that are made.

Where appropriate, Laurel Homecare Ltd will consider complaints to be vexatious, but would not label an individual complainant as vexatious. Even if Laurel Homecare Ltd decides that an individual's complaint about the service is vexatious, that does not preclude that person from making a formal complaint. Laurel Homecare Ltd would still consider any such complaints in line with the usual procedures, as outlined in this policy.

To help decide whether a complaint is vexatious Laurel Homecare Ltd will consider the full history and context of interactions with the individual making the complaint, and will look at both the nature of the complaint and the manner in which it is made. The particular issues that will inform a decision will include whether:

- The primary purpose and/or effect of the complaint is to disturb, disrupt and or/pressurise Laurel

Homecare Ltd, its staff or an individual member of staff

- The primary purpose and/or effect of the manner in which the complaint is made is to disturb, disrupt and or/pressurise the Laurel Homecare Ltd, its staff or an individual member of staff
- The complaint is otherwise clearly unreasonable

If at any point in the handling of a complaint a member of staff believes it meets the criteria to be deemed vexatious, it must be referred to the Registered Manager with a summary of why it is thought to be vexatious.

Sarah Hall will consider the complaint, seek external advice if appropriate, and will either declare the complaint as being vexatious or not. Where a complaint is not deemed to be vexatious it will be returned to the appropriate point in the complaints handling process.

If a complaint is deemed to be vexatious, the Registered Manager will respond directly to the complainant explaining why it is thought to be so and will explain that the complaint will be closed with no further action. The Registered Manager will also consider if the making of a vexatious complaint also requires the application of a restriction on communication following unreasonable behaviour.

The decision to declare a complaint as vexatious will be recorded in the complaints register for future reference.

Any declaration that refers to the specific complaint being vexatious and any further complaints from the same individual will still be considered.

If any individual wishes to challenge a decision made in relation to this policy, and all attempts to resolve the complaint locally have been unsuccessful, details of the Complaints Team of Somerset County Council and Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) will be shared with the complainant.



6. Definitions

6.1 Compliment

- A compliment is an expression of satisfaction about a service the Client has received
- Compliments are positive feedback that can be received verbally or in writing and can include expressions of praise, admiration, congratulation and encouragement

6.2 Complaint

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, disappointment or discontent. This could be in response to an act of omission, decision or act
- Complaints can be made in various ways and include:
 - Verbally
 - Electronically
 - Local feedback channels
 - Writing

6.3 Self-Funded Care

- Self-funded care is defined as care that is paid for entirely by the person receiving it

6.4 Vexatious Complaint

- A vexatious complaint is one that is pursued, regardless of its merits, solely to harass, annoy or subdue somebody; something that is unreasonable, without foundation, frivolous, repetitive, burdensome or unwarranted



Key Facts - Professionals

Professionals providing this service should be aware of the following:

- Any feedback received from Clients or their representatives can influence positive change and quality delivery of care and must be discussed with the manager
- Staff will be involved in quality improvement planning in response to themes from both compliments and complaints received by the service. Compliments will be recognised and celebrated and staff will be supported during any complaints investigations
- The receipt of complaints, suggestions and compliments is everyone's responsibility and therefore staff will know what to say and how to respond. Staff need to be able to promote an open, honest and transparent service to encourage people to feel able to feedback and raise concerns



Key Facts - People affected by the service

People affected by this service should be aware of the following:

- You have the right to feel confident to raise a concern, make a suggestion or give a compliment
- The process for you to raise a concern, make a suggestion or give a compliment will be simple and you will feel listened to and understood
- Your concerns, suggestions and compliments will make a positive difference to future care at Laurel Homecare Ltd



Further Reading

As well as the information in the 'underpinning knowledge' section of the review sheet we recommend that you add to your understanding in this policy area by considering the following materials:

LGO - Resources for Care Providers - Letter templates etc:

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/adult-social-care/resources-for-care-providers>

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman - Principles of Good Complaint Handling:

<https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/about-us/our-principles/principles-good-complaint-handling>

Care Quality Commission - Complaints Matter Report 2014:

https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20141208_complaints_matter_report.pdf

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (2019) - Caring about complaints - Lessons from our independent care provider investigations:

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2019/mar/ombudsman-issues-good-practice-guide-for-care-providers>