



EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. STAGE ONE

- 1.1 All complaints (for complaints relating to the Chief Officer see paragraph 4.1) should be made to the Chief Officer who has overall responsibility for DASH and its services, in the absence of Chief Officer the Acting Deputy will take on the responsibility for this action. A complaints form is available if people wish to use it and can also be supplied in Braille, large print and audio tape.
- 1.2 The Chief Officer will then:
 - reply to acknowledge receipt of the complaint being made and send the complainant a copy of the complaints procedure.
 - inform the complainant that he/she will be given a full response within 2 weeks.
 - record the details of the complainant, if verbal, on a record sheet in the complaints register and attach the correspondence in the case of written complaints.
- 1.3 The Chief Officer will investigate and reply in the preferred format usually within 2 weeks.
- 1.4 All background papers and correspondence should be attached to the complaint record sheet on which all details of the investigation, including the reasons for the Chief Officer's decision, should be recorded. A record of all complaints will be maintained on the completion of investigation for a period of 6 years.

The matter will be considered at an end if the complainant accepts the Chief Officer's decision, or does not respond within 2 weeks of the Chief Officer's letter.

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Continuation/2.....

2 STAGE TWO

- 2.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the Chief Officer's reply, he/she should approach the Trustees of Dash's Management Committee. The Trustees should be contacted in writing. The letter should be marked "**Confidential**" sent to DASH's office.
- 2.2 The Trustees will establish a sub-group of the Management Committee to investigate the complaint. The sub-group will usually comprise of three members and a nominated Chair Person. The Chair will notify the complainant within 7 days of being contacted informing him/her of the setting up of the sub-group.
- 2.3 The sub-group will investigate the matter and will write to the complainant when they have reached a decision. The sub-group's decision, reasons for the decision and any additional papers and correspondence will be recorded on the complaints record sheet.

THE DECISION OF THE SUB-GROUP IS FINAL

3. STAGE THREE

- 3.1 At the next available meeting following the resolution of the complaint, the Management Committee will receive a report on the complaint, and the outcome of the investigation. The Committee will discuss any recommendations for the change arising from the complaint and the subsequent investigation.

4 OTHER POINTS

- 4.1 Where a complaint concerns the Chief Officer, it should be made to the Trustees of the Management Committees in section 2 above.
- 4.2 A record should be maintained of all complaints received and submitted as an annual report to the Management Committee. The annual report should make a comparison with the previous year, give a flavor of the complaints received and recommend changes to these procedures, as they are felt to be necessary.