



## Sherburn House Charity

Sherburn House Charity, Ramsey House, Sherburn House, Durham, County Durham, DH1 2SE



## 4. Policy

### 4.1 Complaints

- | Sherburn House Charity understands complaints to be an expression of dissatisfaction requiring a response, communicated verbally, electronically, or in writing. Complaints may be made by any Service User, their family or advocate acting on their behalf, with their consent or in their best interests
- | Sherburn House Charity 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 Sherburn House Charity will achieve this. The detail of how Sherburn House Charity will do this will be found in the associated procedures
- | Sherburn House Charity 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
- | Sherburn House Charity understands its statutory obligations in respect of the Duty of Candour and will ensure it follows the agreed policy and procedure

**4.2** Sherburn House Charity 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. Sherburn House Charity 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 Service User can understand.

### 4.3 Seeking Views and Engaging with Service Users

Sherburn House Charity will seek out opportunities to obtain feedback from Service Users and stakeholders. Sherburn House Charity will act with sensitivity, integrity and professionalism by treating individuals who do complain or make a suggestion with compassion, courtesy and respect. Sherburn House Charity will protect the Service User's right to confidentiality. Sherburn House Charity will ensure that alternative methods of communication are available so that the complaints and suggestions procedures are accessible for Service Users 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** Sherburn House Charity understands that it can be difficult to separate a complaint from a concern and, therefore, Sherburn House Charity 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 Service User'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 Service User being harmed or likely to be harmed, Sherburn House Charity will follow its Safeguarding Policy and Procedures in addition to the complaints

**Sherburn House Charity**

Sherburn House Charity, Ramsey House, Sherburn House, Durham, County Durham, DH1 2SE

procedures, seeking advice and guidance from the Durham County Council Safeguarding Adults Team and escalating concerns in line with Durham County Council procedure. Sherburn House Charity 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 Sherburn House Charity 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 Service Users 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 Tanya Porthouse 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 Service Users or their representatives may lead to disciplinary action

**Management Team at Sherburn House Charity**

- | The management team at Sherburn House Charity 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
- | Tanya Porthouse is the main point of contact for the receipt, investigation and management of complaints within Sherburn House Charity. However, this may be delegated to a senior member of staff within Sherburn House Charity who holds the experience, knowledge and competence to investigate and manage complaints
- | Sherburn House Charity will ensure the procedure for raising a complaint is accessible and displayed prominently in Sherburn House Charity, on the website of Sherburn House Charity and in Service User information and guides. Alternative languages and formats will be available on request

**4.8 Compliments and Suggestions**

Sherburn House Charity 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 Service Users to support service development and improvement. We will share feedback with our staff.

**4.9 One Complaint, One Response**

Sherburn House Charity will follow the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman best practice](#) and, where Service Users 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.

**Sherburn House Charity**

Sherburn House Charity, Ramsey House, Sherburn House, Durham, County Durham, DH1 2SE

**5. Procedure****5.1 Raising Complaints**

A complaint can be received by Sherburn House Charity either verbally or in writing and can be made by:

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

Sherburn House Charity will ensure that Service Users 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. Sherburn House Charity 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

**Sherburn House Charity**

Sherburn House Charity, Ramsey House, Sherburn House, Durham, County Durham, DH1 2SE

- | 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, Sherburn House Charity 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 Service User, a copy of the complaint will be held in their care records so that the Service User 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 Service Users, safeguarding policies will be followed as per local authority expectation and necessary notifications made to the regulatory body. Where care is commissioned by Durham 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 Service User information, in line with UK GDPR and data protection law.

**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 Sherburn House Charity, 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, 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](http://www.cqc.org.uk)
- | Email [enquiries@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cqc.org.uk)
- | Address: Care Quality Commission (CQC)  
National Correspondence  
Citygate, Gallowgate  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA  
Tel: 03000 616161  
Fax: 03000 616171

**Sherburn House Charity**

Sherburn House Charity, Ramsey House, Sherburn House, Durham, County Durham, DH1 2SE

**2. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (for those Service Users 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](mailto: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 Service Users 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](mailto:phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk)
- | Website [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)
- | Address: Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, Millbank Tower, 30 Millbank, Westminster, London, SW1P 4QP

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

**4. Integrated Care Systems**

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:

Feedback Team Durham County Council County Hall Durham County Durham United Kingdom DH1 5UQ  
03000 269 007

**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, Sherburn House Charity 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. Sherburn House Charity 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 them
- | The number of compliments received is logged as part of a quality assurance programme
- | Verbal, positive feedback from Service Users and relatives is also deemed a compliment and will be recorded and shared with colleagues
- | Compliments form a core agenda item at staff, Service User 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

**Sherburn House Charity**

Sherburn House Charity, Ramsey House, Sherburn House, Durham, County Durham, DH1 2SE

- ┆ 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 Service Users, with Tanya Porthouse
- ┆ Tanya Porthouse will consider implementing a suggestions system to encourage comments from Service Users, staff and visitors

**5.9 Audit and Evaluation**

Sherburn House Charity will monitor, review and analyse all information received about the service as a means of continuously reviewing performance, quality and safety.

Sherburn House Charity will also:

- ┆ Share themes and trends with Care Workers working for Sherburn House Charity
- ┆ 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 Service User's care, they, or their representative, will be able to complain to any of them and Sherburn House Charity will contact the other organisations, carry out a joint investigation and provide a single joint response. Service Users must not have to contact each organisation separately.

If someone complains and Sherburn House Charity is not responsible for the care or service complained about, rather than turning the complainant away, Sherburn House Charity 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), Sherburn House Charity will signpost them to the right organisation instead and provide the person with their contact details. Sherburn House Charity will follow [LGO guidance](#) for managing this.

**5.12** All efforts will be made by Tanya Porthouse to resolve all complaints within Sherburn House Charity. If a Service User does not wish to raise a complaint directly to management within Sherburn House Charity, 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 Sherburn House Charity will be fully respected and the Service User 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.

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

**5.13 Vexatious Complaints**

Occasionally, Sherburn House Charity may receive complaints that are vexatious in that they cause considerable disruption to the work at Sherburn House Charity, 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).

Sherburn House Charity will ensure that it meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled Service Users. In some circumstances, Service Users 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, Sherburn House Charity will consider the needs and circumstances of the Service User or complainant in the first instance and use this information to inform any decisions that are made.

Where appropriate, Sherburn House Charity will consider complaints to be vexatious, but would not label an individual complainant as vexatious. Even if Sherburn House Charity decides that an individual's complaint about the service is vexatious, that does not preclude that person from making a formal complaint. Sherburn House Charity 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 Sherburn House Charity 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:



## Sherburn House Charity

Sherburn House Charity, Ramsey House, Sherburn House, Durham, County Durham, DH1 2SE

- | The primary purpose and/or effect of the complaint is to disturb, disrupt and or/pressurise Sherburn House Charity, 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 Sherburn House Charity, 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.

Tanya Porthouse 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 Durham County Council and Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) will be shared with the complainant.