

COMPLIMENTS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Relate London North West, Hertfordshire, Mid Thames & Bucks (known as Relate, Relate LNWHMTB or the Centre)

Whatever your relationship with us has been, Relate London North West, Hertfordshire, Mid Thames & Buckinghamshire aims to give you a good experience. Whatever service you've had or been involved with, we genuinely want to hear feedback – compliments help us to do more of what works, concerns and complaints help us to improve. You might be a client, a referring agency or maybe someone attending one of our training or development programmes – anyone can get in touch to give us feedback.

We log all feedback, whatever it is, so that when it's a compliment, we can share the good news and when it isn't, we can make sure that we learn and develop. There might be times too when we escalate the issue ourselves: for example, if we feel there is an immediate concern around someone's safety or if there may be a quality assurance concern.

Our Procedure

For Compliments

Hearing positive feedback helps us to build on what we already do.

Most of the time we really help and support the people who come to us. Perhaps we've made things feel more manageable or helped you work through difficult issues. Perhaps you've referred someone, and they've told you they had a good experience with us. Maybe you've really enjoyed being part of one of our training and development opportunities. If any of these apply, it would be great to know, so please get in touch. You can phone 0300 003 2324 or email: feedback@relatentc.org.uk

For Concerns and Complaints

Sometimes we don't get it right. Sometimes we make mistakes or maybe don't explain things as well as we might have done. If you feel that's the case, then please tell us straight away or as soon as you can so we can sort out whatever's worrying you as quickly and as efficiently as possible. The sooner you let us know something isn't right, the sooner we will look into what's worrying you.

Stage 1

Sorting something out

Whatever you want to tell us, the best place to start is to feedback directly to the relevant service provider. Depending on what's concerning you, this might be the counsellor, mediator, administrator or manager. You can email or phone and they will do their best to help because we genuinely want to sort things out with you. Any Relate LNWHMTB person supporting you with your complaint will treat you **courteously and efficiently**. So that we can get to the bottom of things as quickly and as helpfully as possible, we ask that you respond to us in the same way.

You can also use the general feedback e-mail: feedback@relatentc.org.uk

Whichever method you choose, please let us know what is concerning you and whether you are:

- A current client
- A client who has finished work with Relate
- You are attending group training or a development programme
- You are an external organisation or referrer into one of our services
- You are not the client but are concerned about the service a client has received or is receiving

Whoever you get in touch with (unless it's resolved straight away, e.g. you've discussed your query and feel okay with the outcome so nothing more needs to be done) we will acknowledge your enquiry within forty-eight hours (or seventy-two hours if it's at a weekend).

Within fifteen working days of that acknowledgement, you should have had a reply either answering your query or explaining what we're doing to follow things up. If for any reason we can't keep to this time limit, maybe because a key person involved in the concern or complaint is on leave or away sick, we'll let you know and keep you up to date with what's happening.

Sometimes we might ask to talk with you again to make sure we've properly understood what you're unhappy about. Once we've looked at what's worrying you, we'll offer you an explanation, clarification or an apology.

We'll also let you know to whom you can write or email if you don't agree with the outcome of the complaint. This is an appeal. The person to whom

you write will carefully review whether our procedures have been properly carried and if not, what else we are now going to do about the concerns you have raised.

Stage 2

Although most matters are completed at stage 1, there may be occasional circumstances where it could be helpful to take a concern or complaint further. This might, for example, be where the concerns that have been raised are exceptionally complex. You can request this stage, or we may decide to implement it ourselves. You don't have to take part if you choose not to, and you can request to be notified of the outcome subsequently – should you so wish.

Any stage 2 investigation will be undertaken by a member of Relate LNWHMTB staff who is independent of the people who have already considered it. They may ask to speak with you and will also speak to the relevant Relate LNWHMTB people. They will keep you fully informed about what's happening and then provide you with the outcome.

We'll always do our best to keep you up to date and respond to you in a timely manner and with efficiency and courtesy to reach the fairest outcome. Sometimes though, either due to sickness or staff leave it may not be possible to get back to you with the outcome within that time frame, but they will always keep you fully informed about when you can expect a decision.

Again, if you do not agree with the outcome, you can request an appeal.

Requesting an appeal

Whether your complaint is investigated at stage 1 or at stage 2, if you're not happy with the outcome of your complaint you can ask that a senior member of Relate LNWHMTB looks at whether the complaints process has been properly followed.

The person handling the appeal will decide if the complaint has been conducted in line with our complaints policy and procedure. They will aim to do this within fifteen working days of your request. If for any reason it's not possible to do this, they will keep you fully informed about when you can expect to hear the outcome of your appeal.

If your complaint is about mediation and is not resolved within the organisation you can ask the Family Mediation Standards Board to consider the complaint if certain criteria are met. Details are available here: <https://www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk/complaints-about-mediators>

Remember – if you're not happy, please tell us. The sooner we know, the sooner we can sort things out.

Relate London North West, Hertfordshire Mid Thames and Buckinghamshire Contact details

Address:

The Gables
St Mary's Road
Hemel Hempstead
Herts
HP2 5HL

Phone:

0300 003 2324

Email for counselling:

Appointments@relatentc.org.uk

Email for mediation:

Mediation@relatentc.org.uk

General feedback e-mail:

Feedback@relatentc.org.uk

Relate London North West, Hertfordshire, Mid Thames & Buckinghamshire is also committed to the good practice principles set out in the complaints policy of national Relate shown below:

Relate National's Complaints Policy [Issued Jan 2024]

The six key good practice principles below describe our Relate approach to managing a client complaint.

Relate staff and clients alike must understand our client complaints process.

Information about how to complain should be available on any Relate website and made available to any client who contacts their service provider or centre directly.

All staff and particularly practitioners, supervisors and managers must be fully cognisant of their respective roles and responsibilities, what should happen when and what forms of support are available to support a fair and transparent investigation.

Any complaint is managed promptly, efficiently, and effectively.

Complainants and those complained against should be kept fully up to date with every stage of the complaint process. Delays in process should be carefully managed with clear rationales provided for any delay with an indication of the revised timeline for completion of the complaint investigation process.

Prioritising a therapeutic approach to complaint handling which emphasises fair play, transparency, respect and a duty of candour and accountability.

Complainants and those complained against should expect fair, respectful and transparent dealings, unless to do so increases the risk of harm to the complainant, the person complained about or a third party.

All actions relating to the complaint handling are recorded for transparency and auditing purposes.

Client complaints should be investigated using the process and guidance available to all complaint handlers and which supports accurate record keeping.

Recommendations arising from a complaint investigation, or an appeal are implemented and monitored for satisfactory completion.

It is the responsibility of the complaint handler or their designate to monitor that recommendations arising from any complaint investigation are monitored to ensure satisfactory completion.

Sharing good practice.

Complaints provide us with opportunities for reflection and growth both individually and as an organisation. Candour and accountability sit at the heart of understanding what we do well and what we must improve. Sharing learning that supports service delivery excellence should form the basis of Relate’s approach to addressing any client complaint.

Author	Date last updated	Review Date
Relate Practice Service Team	April 2022 Reviewed by Relate NTC Senior Management Team	April 2023
	August 2023	August 2024
Relate LNWHMTB SMT Team	May 2024 v2 Nov 2024 with updated email addresses	May 2026