

Customer Charter and Complaints Policy

Reviewed November 2019

Next review date: 3yrs from previous review or as legislation or learning requires

Customer Charter

Introduction and purpose of this document

The Customer Charter and Complaints policy is outward-facing. It is for our service users, member organisations and partner organisations that wish to understand our approach to customer service. It also outlines the complaints procedure should an individual, member organisation or partner organisation wish to raise a concern or complaint.

At the heart of Forum's customer charter is our commitment to:

- To inform, support and influence the development of opportunities and services to reflect the needs of people, communities and the voluntary sector
- To listen, respond and give a voice to people, communities and the voluntary sector
- To work in true partnership with our stakeholders

Who are our customers?

Any individual or organisation who has a relationship with Forum – our external stakeholders, this may be a 'one-off' encounter or a longer term relationship. Our customers include our staff and volunteers too.

Customer care is a priority and is included in the following strategies and plans:

- Annual Report
- Business Plan

Customer Care

Forum will:

- Ensure fair and equal access to all customers
- Provide responsive, flexible and reliable services
- Provide a consistent, co-ordinated and proactive service.
- Listen and respond appropriately to customers; treating our customers with respect and courtesy
- Enable customers to feedback easily through customer surveys, focus groups, direct feedback, consultations and complaint handling – we will measure satisfaction
- Be receptive to feedback and use this feedback as part of our continuous improvement cycle
- Review the needs of our customers regularly and change/adapt our services where appropriate to accommodate the customer needs
- Only act in the best interest of the customer

- Provide customers with relevant, accurate and up to date information as applicable
- Follow up and quickly try to resolve customer complaints or concerns
- Evaluate, review and understand the impact of our service

Working with Others

Forum will:

- Ensure those working with us or on our behalf and all our staff understand our purpose, aims and values as an organisation
- Review our business objectives frequently to ensure they are in line with customer feedback
- Regularly review and identify the different needs our customer groups
- Keep our staff and other stakeholder up to date with the changes in our service provision
- Build successful partnerships and relationships for the benefit of our customers
- Improve and develop our services by working in partnership with other organisations when feasible
- Share our knowledge where appropriate

Forum staff

Forum will:

- Ensure we recruit the right people with a customer focused approach by using effective and appropriate recruitment techniques
- Ensure our staff understand their role within Forum and be clear of our expectations of them
- Value our staff, their skills, knowledge and abilities
- Ensure our volunteers understand how we value them and support them to achieve their aims and those of Forum
- Review the skills of our staff and provide support as required so that they can provide the best service to our customers
- Use customer feedback to help us review and appraise our staff; developing them to perform their job effectively and efficiently

Customer Care Protocols

All staff and representatives of Forum will:

- Deal with enquiries promptly
- Answer telephone calls without delay and identify themselves to the caller at the outset
- Give written responses to letters and e-mails within 10 working days of receipt

- Deal with customers fairly and equally. They will uphold Forums Equal Opportunities Policy
- Uphold Forums Data Protection Policy when supporting customers
- Uphold Forums Health and Safety and Lone Working Policies when supporting customers and will report all breaches/concerns to Forums Health and Safety Officer
- Safeguard themselves and each other from inappropriate behaviour from the public and report any such incidents to their line manager

Complaints Procedure

Forum is committed to providing a high quality service and strives to carry out its activities in a way that is fair, efficient, effective and professional. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to improve our standards.

If, as a customer, member organisation or partner organisation you have a concern or complaint about something Forum has done, or about the actions, behaviour or attitude of a staff member then please follow this procedure.

An individual, member organisation or partner organisation may make a complaint if they feel Forum has:

- Failed to provide an acceptable standard of service
- Made a mistake in the way the service was provided
- Failed to act in a proper way
- Provided an unfair service

Please note this is an outward-facing policy/process for our stakeholders. Staff or volunteers that wish to make a complaint should speak with their manager or another senior staff member as appropriate, or refer to the relevant Forum policy or procedure, which may include:

- Staff/volunteer review process
- Grievance Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

There are several stages to our complaints procedure:

- Stage 1 - Informal Complaint or Concern
- Stage 2 - Formal Complaint
- Stage 3 - Appeal

Stage 1 - Informal Complaint or Concern

Wherever possible we will always try to resolve complaints informally by talking to you. If you also hope to resolve the matter informally, please contact the Chief Officer if possible by telephone to discuss your concerns.

The Chief Officer will investigate the matter and respond to you, either verbally or in writing, whichever you prefer. The Chief Officer may not be able to respond immediately to your concern, so will agree a response within an agreed timescale.

Should the concern raised involve the Chief Officer and you are not comfortable in discussing the issue with them please contact the Deputy Chief Officer.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

If you wish to formalise your concern or complaint, you should write to the Chief Officer providing:

- The details and nature of your complaint
- What outcome you are expecting
- A response address – email or postal address

You can send your complaint by post or email, please title the email or mark the envelope:

‘Confidential - complaints procedure

For the attention of the Chief Officer’

If your complaint concerns the Chief Officer, then please title the email or mark the envelope:

‘Confidential - complaints procedure

For the attention of the Chair of Trustees’

Forum will respond to you in the same format in which you raised the complaint. We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days of receiving it and provide a timescale for investigating and responding to your complaint.

You will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and provided a dated response to your complaint in writing, in the same format in which you raised the complaint.

If the outcome of the investigation of the complaint is unfounded and further vexatious action is taken, then Forum will seek legal advice to bring the matter to a close.

Stage 3 - Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint at Stage 2 you should write to the Chair of Trustees at Forum within 20 working days of the date of our response, stating:

- Why you are appealing – why you feel your complaint has not been resolved or responded to adequately
- What outcome you are expecting
- A response address – email or postal address

You can send your complaint by post or email, please title the email or mark the envelope:

'Confidential - complaints procedure - appeal

For the attention of the Chair of Trustees'

The Chair of Trustees will respond to you in the same format in which you raised the appeal, acknowledging receipt of your appeal within five working days of receiving it.

A Forum trustee will review the Stage 2 investigation and recommend one of the following actions within twenty working days (from the date of receipt of your Stage 3 - Appeal request):

- Uphold the action taken by Forum at Stage 2
- Make changes to the Stage 2 recommendation/actions.

You will be informed in writing of the outcome of stage three, the decision reached about this complaint will then be final – there will be no right to further appeal.

If the outcome of the investigation of the complaint is unfounded and further vexatious action is taken, then Forum will seek legal advice to bring the matter to a close.

Other

Any issues regarding employees of Forum will be managed through the internal disciplinary/grievance procedures; the outcomes of those proceedings will remain confidential.

Issues relating to the business of Forum will be reported to the Board of Trustees for their consideration and action.

Any complaints made about Forum's activities are monitored through the internal quality assurance system and as such may be reported to the membership at the AGM.

Future Objectives

Forum is committed to seeking continuous improvement in the services it provides to its customers and stakeholders, in summary we aim to:

- Improve customer satisfaction levels
- Adapt and respond to changes in the voluntary and community sector, both nationally and locally, and to the needs of our members, customers and stakeholders
- Improve service delivery at all times

Communicating this policy

This policy/procedure will be communicated through:

- Our websites

- Our privacy notices and consent forms
- By email to anyone raising concerns through this communication method
- Verbally to anyone who expresses dissatisfaction or concern

Forum contact details

Chief Officer- Jason Stamp

Contact Number: 01482 499036

Email: Jason@nbforum.org.uk

Deputy Chief Officer- Pippa Robson

Contact Number: 01482 499032

Email: Pippa@nbforum.org.uk

Chair of the Trustees

Email: ali@nbforum.org.uk and your complaint will be forwarded to the Chair of the Trustees

Registered Address

Goodwin Community Hub,
63-71 Anlaby Road
Hull
HU3 2LL

END