



Subject	Complaints & Compliments Policy
Document Reference	Section COMP 01.08.01
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Policy Statement

Life is committed to providing a high-quality service. The complaints and compliments policy enables Life to respond clearly and properly to complaints and to know when and why people are not satisfied with our services, so that Life can improve on them.

Life is committed to maintaining an accessible and open procedure by responding positively to complaints and trying to resolve complaints informally in the first instance.

Complaints will be investigated fully and fairly in an efficient manner. All formal complaints will be acknowledged within five working days and investigated and reported back within twenty working days.

If the complainant is not happy with the response, they will have the right to appeal. All appeals should be forwarded to the Head of Central Services who will arrange for an independent person to conduct the appeal. Complainants raising matters connected with fundraising issues have a second right of appeal to the Deputy CEO or CEO.

If the complaint is related to:

- **Counselling** - the complainant can contact the British Association for Counseling & Psychotherapy (BACP)
- **Fundraising** - the complainant can contact the Fundraising Regulator
- **Housing** - the complainant can contact either:
 - Housing Ombudsman Service (only after the internal complaints process has been exhausted)
 - The relevant Commissioning Body if the service is provided under a support contract
- **Retail** – the complainant may contact the Retail Ombudsman

Employees should use Life’s Grievance Policy and Procedure as their route to lodge a complaint. Alternatively, employees may also use Life’s “Whistle Blowing” procedure.

There are three stages to Life's complaints procedure. The complainant may have an advocate, friend or someone to support them at any stage. Life will ensure that reasonable efforts will be made to meet any special requirements needed to assist the complainant with the complaint.

Stage 1 - Informal Complaint

An informal complaint does not need to be logged centrally, but a file note should be made of the date and brief outline of the complaint within each service. The initial investigation can be completed by any member of staff, who should advise their line manager that they are dealing with an informal complaint.

The complainant should give their name and either a verbal or written account of their complaint. The investigator should document the complaint and try to resolve the issues, to the satisfaction of the complainant. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, the investigator should explain the formal complaints procedure and give them a complaint form to complete.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

The Head of Central Services is the coordinator for all complaints and has overall responsibility for ensuring that they are handled appropriately. If a formal complaint is received by any other person then it must be passed immediately to the Head of Central Services for processing.

The Head of Central services will forward the complaint, with a unique complaint reference number to the relevant manager who will then have overall responsibility for investigating the complaint.

All formal complaints are acknowledged in writing to the complainant within five working days of receipt of the initial complaint. The investigating manager must ensure that the complaint is investigated thoroughly and fairly ensuring that a written response is given to the complainant within 21 working days from the start of the investigation.

The response will include the following information:

- Details of the investigation undertaken
- A decision about whether the complaint was upheld or not
- The reason for the decision
- If appropriate, an apology will be offered, or further support/advice will be given.
- Details of any other action that may be required, i.e. report to other statutory bodies
- Details of how to appeal

If there is a delay in completion of the complaint before the stated deadline, correspondence will be sent outlining the reasons for this delay and a new date for completion should be given.

Stage 3 – Appeal

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, then they should outline the reason(s) for their dissatisfaction to the Head of Central Services in writing within ten working days of receiving the response to their complaint. The appeal will be considered by someone that has had no previous involvement in the complaint.

They will revisit the complaint and investigate whether or not the complaint was dealt with appropriately. Following a full investigation, they will make a final decision. They will write to the complainant within twenty working days of receiving the appeal, to confirm the final decision and the reasons.

Fundraising complainants are entitled to a second appeal to the Deputy CEO or CEO if they are still not happy with the outcome of the first appeal.

The complainant can contact the Housing Ombudsman if they are still dissatisfied with a housing related complaint. They should initially do this through a designated person (usually local councillor or MP) or direct to the Ombudsman after 8 weeks of Life’s internal complaints process being concluded. Alternatively, they may also complain to the appropriate Commissioning Body for services provided under a support contract or to their Registered Provider where their tenancy is not with Life.

Complainants can contact the Fundraising Regulator, BACP or Retail Ombudsman at any stage in the process in relation to fundraising, counselling or retail related complaints.

Time Limits/Stopping the Complaint

It will be the responsibility of the person who is investigating the complaint to adjust timescales and update the complainant in writing if any timescales change due to unforeseen circumstances.

If the complainant wishes to withdraw the complaint at anytime this can be done in writing to the investigating officer and an acknowledgment letter will be sent to the complainant within the five-day response timescale.

Compliments

All compliments that are received should be logged within the relevant Microsoft Teams channel system.

Review

All complaints and compliments received informally or formally should be reviewed regularly by department managers to identify learning outcomes and best practice and share them with employees, volunteers and clients.

1 Life– GDPR compliance

o This policy does not concern the collection, storage, or processing of any personal data, nor does it affect any other policies or systems that concern personal data.
(If you have highlighted the above there is no need to complete the rest of this declaration)

I have read and understood the Life GDPR Policy and confirm that the Policy above fully complies with it in all areas.

	Lawful Basis for this Policy:	Add 'yes' to which one(s) apply.
a	Legal obligation	Yes
b	Legitimate interest	
c	Contract	
d	Vital interest	
e	Consent	
d	Special Category (e.g., Children’s data)	
	Please state the purpose for special category:	

	I confirm that all personal data is:	Add 'yes' to which one(s) apply.
a	Held only in the locations detailed in this Policy.	Yes
b	Used only for the purposes stated.	Yes
c	Held securely.	Yes

	By signing this Policy, you are agreeing to the following:	
a.	A Data Processor Agreement is in place with all external organisations (Data Processors) who are in receipt of personal data under the terms of this Policy.	
b.	The relevant Policy Notices under this Policy have been published in an appropriate manner.	

	The person(s) responsible for data protection covered by this Policy are: (List Persons below)	Insert Date
1	Emma Turner	22/06/2021
2		

As the above-named person, I confirm that this Policy complies with the General Data protection Regulations 2018

Signed: 

Name: Emma Turner

Date: 22nd June 2021

Note: Life has chosen not to appoint a Data Protection Officer which is permitted under GDPR and so this responsibility is devolved to the appropriate person named under this Policy.