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| <b>OP 1</b>                           | <b>Service User Complaints Procedure</b> |
| <b>Operational as of May 5th 2009</b> | <b>For review: April 4th 2010</b>        |

## **1 Policy Statement**

Ana Liffey Drug Project is committed to providing the best possible service to our service users. As part of this commitment Ana Liffey Drug Project takes seriously any complaint service users have about our service.

## **2 Purpose**

To ensure that people's views are considered sympathetically and professionally and that staff respond in an appropriate manner when dealing with complaints made by service users. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is defined as being

“an expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the ALDP’s services made by people who use those services, either in person or through an advocate, for which a remedy is sought that needs the involvement of management staff to achieve”

## **3 Scope**

This procedure covers the actions that should be taken should a service user wish to complain about any aspect of the Ana Liffey Drug Project. This policy applies to all staff members, locums and volunteers. It also applies to persons from other agencies conducting in-reach services in ALDP for the duration of the time that they are on ALDP premises.

## **4 Principles**

### **4.1 General guidelines on complaints**

- 4.1.1 All complaints should be dealt with promptly, and within the timescales outlined.
- 4.1.2 As far as possible all complaints should be resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- 4.1.3 Complainants should be consulted about what they would like to happen about their complaint.
- 4.1.4 Complainants should be supported and given appropriate assistance throughout the procedure. They should be given the opportunity to be supported by an advocate. For the purposes of this policy an advocate is taken as being anyone who has the service user’s written permission to complain on their behalf, excluding ALDP staff, and in compliance with 4.2.3, below.
- 4.1.5 The complaints procedure should be well publicized. A template is included in Section 7 of this policy document and should be displayed prominently in the project. All new service users will be given a brief explanation of the complaints procedure as part of their induction
- 4.1.6 All complaints must be properly recorded. A Complaints Record Sheet is appended to this policy document and should be used for recording purposes. The Services Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that complaints are properly recorded.

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- 4.1.7 All complaints should be recorded on the Complaints Record Sheet, which should be signed by the complainant, by the staff member recording the complaint, and by the services coordinator. If at any stage there are alterations to the complaint this should be recorded and signed and dated.
- 4.1.8 A complaints file should be maintained and regularly monitored by the Services Coordinator

## **4.2 Who can complain?**

- 4.2.1 Any person who has received a service from the ALDP may complain.
- 4.2.2 An advocate may complain on the person's behalf, if they have that person's written consent. Care should be taken to ensure that the person advocating on behalf of the person making a complaint is representing the complainant's views and wishes
- 4.2.3 A parent / guardian may complain on behalf of a child
- 4.2.4 While supporting the right of a complainant to invite an advocate to accompany them, ALDP reserves the right to veto the attendance of an advocate who it believes would compromise the process or whose presence would breach confidentiality and/or data protection. A list of advocates is available from the Director.

## **4.3 What can they complain about?**

- 4.3.1 A person may complain about:
- a) any part of the service that they have received
  - b) a decision made about them that affects them
  - c) being denied a service
  - d) any changes to service provision
  - e) a member of staff

If the complaint is about a), b), c) or d) above, the complainant should be offered support in making their complaint as per the terms of this policy, detailed in Section 5, below.

- 4.3.2 If the complaint is about a member of staff, the complainant should be immediately referred to an ALDP manager. The complainant should be informed that the staff member will be told of the complaint that has been made against them. The matter will pass to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure as indicated at 5.1.2, below.
- 4.3.3 If the complaint is about a manager, the matter should be immediately referred in writing to the Director. The complainant should be informed that the manager will be told of the complaint that has been made against them.
- 4.3.4 If the complaint is about the Director, the matter should be immediately referred in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. The complainant should be

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informed that the Director will be told of the complaint that has been made against them.

- 4.3.5 If at any stage the complaint is considered to be one of professional misconduct, this complaint procedure will be suspended, and the issue will be dealt with under ALDP disciplinary procedures. The complainant will be notified of this.

## **5 PROCEDURE**

### 5.1 The Procedural Stages

There are three stages to the complaints procedure.

- Stage 1           The pre-complaint stage
- Stage 2           The complaint stage
- Stage 3           The review stage

#### 5.1.1 Stage 1

If a service user has a problem with an aspect of the service they should inform a staff member. The staff member will make every effort to resolve the problem locally. Time should be taken and talking concerns over with the service user should be seen as part of the normal service. The staff member may seek assistance from management at this stage in resolving the problem. In the event that the problem cannot be resolved locally it must be recorded as a formal complaint to be progressed further.

NB: Stage 1 does not apply to complaints involving staff members, which is dealt with 4.3, above.

#### 5.1.2 Stage 2

- 5.1.2.1 The complaint should be formally put in writing to the Services Co-ordinator. This correspondence should include:

A copy of a Complaints Record Sheet (Template B), clearly detailing:

- The nature of the complaint
- Why the initial response was unsatisfactory
- What the complainant's desired outcome would be

The complainant may be assisted in this process if they so wish by an advocate, as specified in this policy.

- 5.1.2.2 The Services Co-ordinator will need to investigate the complaint, form a decision on the complaint and inform the complainant in writing. Where a complaint involves two or more individuals, all parties will have the opportunity to give their version of events to the Service Co-Ordinator in private. The Services Co-ordinator will complete investigations within ten working days of receiving the complaint. The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation. If the

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complainant is still not satisfied they will be advised of Stage 3 and the complaint can then be passed to the Director of Ana Liffey Drug Project who will liaise with Ana Liffey Drug Project Council of Management Committee regarding the complaint.

### 5.1.3 Stage 3

A meeting should be set up with the Director to consider the complaint within four weeks. This may require the complainant to be present; the complainant would be entitled to bring an advocate. The outcome of this meeting would be communicated to the complainant in writing within 3 days. The Ana Liffey Drug Project Council of Management will be informed of the outcome of the complaint

## 6 RECORDING

- 6.1** All complaints and their nature should be recorded in order that they can be reviewed by the organisation. At Stage 1 the Staff member dealing with the problem should note the issue at the daily wind down / weekly team meeting, as appropriate. At Stage 2, the complaint should be put in writing as per this policy. At Stage 3, the complaint will be passed to the Director and they will be responsible for a response.
- 6.2** All records of complaints should be kept in a designated complaints file and are the responsibility of the Services Co-ordinator.

## 7 STANDARD FORMS AND LETTERS

- 7.1** The following standard forms should be used in conjunction with this policy.
- Template A – Publicizing the complaints procedure.
  - Template B – Recording complaints