

Compliments, concerns and complaints

We genuinely want to hear feedback – compliments help us to do more of what works, concerns and complaints help us improve.

Relate aims to give you a good experience. Most of the time we do this. And if that's the case, it would be great to know, so please get in touch.

But sometimes we don't get it right. Sometimes we make mistakes or maybe didn'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.

We operate a three stage process, after which, if we still haven't found a resolution to the problem, there are various options external to Relate that you can pursue:

For compliments:

1. If we've done something well, helped you or maybe just made things a bit more bearable, tell us so we can learn how to do more of it.
2. You can do this in person or via phone or email on 01604 634400 and appointments@relatenorthants.org.uk.

For concerns and complaints:

1. If something isn't quite right, again, please tell us. We really want to know. Usually we can fix things very quickly by talking together.

You can do this in person or via phone or email 01604 634400 and info@relatenorthants.org.uk.

2. If we don't find a resolution at this stage, we might need to carry out a more formal "investigation". This is likely to be by more senior members of the organisation who might not have initially been involved in the service delivery.
3. If at this stage there is still no resolution, the issue will be passed to the Chief Executive or the Board of Trustees for consideration.

At any point you have the option of involving external governing bodies. However they will often expect you to have followed the previous steps before they will become involved.

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, to keep track of things and 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.

Here's a bit more detail:

Stage 1: to start with...

Extra support

We know that raising a concern can be difficult – sometimes you're not quite sure exactly what the issue is. Sometimes you've just too much on. Sometimes, you're worried that by raising a concern, it will affect the type of support you get from us. We'd like to ensure that you have the support to feedback to us. Some places you can go for additional support include your local Council for Voluntary Service and the Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Whatever you want to tell us, the best place to start is to feedback directly to the people or service involved. The counsellor, centre or service manager want to hear you. So, you can write, email, speak with or ask someone else to speak for you with the person or people delivering the service and they will do their best to help you.

Hayley Stent
Relate
St Giles House
76 St Giles Street
Northampton
01604 634400
Hayley.stent@relatenorthants.org.uk.

If that doesn't feel quite right, you can use the general feedback e-mail Servicesfeedback@Relate.org.uk. Please be sure to let us know which service, centre or person you have a query about, otherwise we can't pass on the positive or help to sort things out.

Whoever you get in touch with (unless it's resolved straight away, e.g., you've discussed your query with the counsellor and feel happy with the outcome so nothing more needed) we will acknowledge your enquiry within 48 hours (or 72 hours if it's at a weekend).

Within five days of that acknowledgement, you should have had a more detailed reply either answering your query, or explaining what we're doing to follow things up – this should include a time by which you'll hear from us again. If for any reason we can't keep to this time frame, maybe because a key person involved in the concern or complaint is on leave or away sick, we'll offer you a new time frame 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.

Then, once we have a response to your query, we'll be in touch to see if it resolves things.

Stage 2: if you're still not happy

You can ask for your query to be looked at again. This will generally be by a senior member of Relate staff who is independent of the people who have already looked at your query. You can let us know you want to do this, either by responding to the person who has fed back at Step 1, or using any of the other methods described above.

Again, we will ensure we stay in touch with you to explain what's happening and when you can expect to hear from us. We may ask to speak with you again to get any further information that could be helpful to reaching the best outcome for you.

Stage 3: takings things further

If you still feel that your query remains unresolved, the matter can be referred to the Chief Executive or Board of Trustees for their consideration. They will be looking to ensure that the process has been properly followed and that the investigation has looked at all details.

Stage 4: involving external organisations

If you're still not satisfied, there are a number of options available to you, depending on the nature of your complaint such as:

- ☐ The Charity Commission <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>
- ☐ British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) <https://www.bacp.co.uk/>
- ☐ The funder for the service in question

Most of these organisations will have expected you to have completed the above steps before they become involved, but you can always check with them to find out the best way forward.

Remember, if you are not happy, please tell us. The sooner we know, the sooner we can put it right.