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Four Cs Policy - Comments, Concerns, Complaints & Compliments

Gaddum Policy Front Sheet

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Updated all areas of the document to: - Be clear on processes in relation to all complaints, comments, concerns and compliments - Outline Stage Two complaints process - Outline Appeal process - Correct contents page and section headings for better user experience	Ben Whalley	19 th January 2023
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Four Cs Policy: Comments, Concerns, Complaints & Compliments

1. Context

1.1. Gaddum is committed to providing the highest quality, most effective, and safest services for services users, families, and to the general public. However, in doing so, we acknowledge that there are times when we must reflect on something we have done (or have omitted to do) that may have had a detrimental impact.

1.2. In these situations, Gaddum recognises its duty to collect, analyse, review, and learn from feedback to understand what went well, what didn't go well, and whether there were other lessons we could have learned from a situation. Gaddum will also ensure that, in these situations, we implement, track, and measure improvements to ensure they address identified issues.

1.3. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our services is by learning from listening and responding to the views of our service users, their families, and all other stakeholders so that we:

- reflect on all **comments** received to improve and provide better services
- address **concerns** promptly to try and resolve them quickly and satisfactorily
- investigate **complaints**, taking prompt action to rectify issues and address any detriments arising out of action or omission
- explore **compliments**, celebrating them and passing these on to colleagues and stakeholders who will appreciate them, *and* to continue to provide the level and manner of service that initiated the praise

1.4. In all of the above, Gaddum will acknowledge and respond within agreed timeframes.

1.5. To ensure the above, Gaddum will work in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of all our stakeholders, encouraging and welcoming feedback in the communication method that is preferred (verbal, written etc).

2. Definitions

2.1. The following definitions will apply for the purpose of this policy:

- **4Cs**
Comments, Concerns, Complaints, and Compliments
- **Comment**

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An observation, expression of personal opinion, or suggestion for improvement – without an expectation from the person making the comment that action is required.

- **Concern**

Issues of importance, interest, or worry raised by a service user or stakeholder which they wish to be dealt with on an informal basis. Concerns do not require a formal investigation as the issues raised should be capable of resolution locally and quickly.

- **Complaint**

Any dissatisfaction raised, either verbally or in writing (including by email), about any aspect of service provided by Gaddum which the individual or their representative (with the individual's consent) or any person has specifically asked to be addressed through Gaddum's 4Cs procedure.

A complaint may be made by any person about concerns they have regarding the quality of service that they have experienced.

- **Compliment**

Positive feedback or an expression of gratitude from a service user or stakeholder about Gaddum, a member of staff, or the service they have experienced.

- **Feedback**

A generic term used in this document to indicate any information (a comment, concern, complaint, or compliment) that someone wants Gaddum to hear and/or do something about.

- **Informal Resolution**

Any issue that is resolved satisfactorily within 48 hours is not considered a complaint.

- **Local Resolution**

The first stage of our complaints procedure – an informal process to try and resolve the issue.

3. *Scope and purpose*

3.1. This policy and procedure will address all feedback, statements, and observations from **external** sources. As such, any person wishing to comment, raise a concern, submit a complaint, or send on a compliment will receive information relevant to their needs. A copy of this policy is available on Gaddum's website for download, emailed copies can be sent, and hard copies posted or made available by request.

3.2. This policy applies to all representatives of Gaddum, including (but not necessarily limited to) employees, students, volunteers, and trustees. It does not apply to contractors or suppliers to the organisation, but the organisation may be required to

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investigate and pass on to a contractor or supplier any comments, concerns, compliments, or complaints where appropriate.

3.3. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Charity may amend it at any time.

3.4. Feedback in general, but particularly a complaint or concern, can also be raised by a service user's relative, carer, or representative when the service user:

- (or carer) has granted consent for the representative to act on their behalf
- has died
- is under the age of 18, and the person making contact with Gaddum either;
 - has parental responsibility for that individual, or
 - is acting in a statutory capacity regarding the care of that individual
- the individual has the legal right to raise a concern on behalf of the service user

3.5. Feedback will also be deemed to have been received when a serious incident has occurred (refer to our '*Serious Incident Policy*') and which may trigger a response via this policy.

3.6. This procedure does not cover situations where an employee feels it necessary to raise an issue – in these situations it is advised the employee seeks information from the:

- Grievance Policy,
- Whistleblowing Policy,
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy,
- Duty of Candour Policy,
- Employee Handbook, or
- Business Support Team for advice.

3.7. The following do not come within the scope of this policy:

- A complaint received from a local authority, another NHS body, primary care provider, or independent provider.
- A complaint by an employee of a local authority or NHS body about any matter relating to that employment.
- A complaint which is made verbally and resolved to the individual's satisfaction no later than the next working day after which the complaint was made (though records will be kept of the situation, on our client database).

4. Responsibilities

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4.1. Gaddum's **Senior Leadership Team** (SLT) has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with any relevant regulatory or statutory frameworks. In addition:

- Liaising with legal/regulatory bodies in connection with matters relating to complaints or concerns
- Feeding back any 4C data to other stakeholders as required
- Ensuring the 4Cs policy remains fit for purpose in the light of feedback from Service Managers, including Business Systems Manager

4.2. Day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review has been delegated to the **Business Systems Manager**. Their responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that our 4Cs routes are well-publicised in ways which reach all service users and their carers and families
- Keeping relevant records/logs of all 4Cs received by Gaddum
- Monitoring our 4C processes to ensure that they are developed, agreed, and communicated throughout Gaddum
- Providing reports and/or analytics to the SLT on any 4C issues
- Ensuring concerns and complaints are investigated, including identifying and agreeing actions to resolve concerns and complaints
- Supporting individuals and staff during concerns and complaints processing
- Communicating lessons learned to relevant departments/teams
- Making recommendations for staff training and other support measures arising from issues identified

4.3. **Line managers** will ensure they are familiar with the contents of this policy and support their staff to deal promptly with issues raised by services users; it will be a regular discussion point in 1 to 1s, supervisions, and team meetings.

4.4. All **members of staff**, regardless of where they work or what they do, must:

- Read through this document and understand our processes for dealing with comments, concerns, complaints, and compliments
- Be confident to handle feedback from an external source
- Uphold our values at all times when dealing with such issues
- Direct services users or others giving us feedback to the appropriate resource to obtain help, advice, or further information
- Provide appropriate support to any complainant who requires help in identifying or articulating a problem (for example, arising from literacy limitations)

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- Ensure all feedback received is handled promptly and correctly

4.5. Complainants (that is an individual who does not work for Gaddum) should:

- Initially raise concern(s) promptly and directly with a member of staff, who will inform their line manager and the Business Systems Manager.
- Put complaints in writing as soon as practical to complaints@gaddum.org.uk (or by any other communication method they are comfortable with) and set out to:
 - Explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date
 - State how they would like things to be resolved
 - Allow Gaddum a reasonable time to deal with the matter
 - Recognise that some circumstances may be beyond Gaddum's control

5. Comments and Compliments: Key Principles and Process

- 5.1.** All comments and compliments will be logged using the organisation's feedback tracker. All individuals making compliments should be asked what ways they would agree to their compliment being shared.
- 5.2.** Compliments should be shared with the person or service being complimented, and their line manager and relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team made aware.
- 5.3.** As Gaddum is proud of the exceptional services it delivers, where compliments are received (and where there is consent from the person making the compliment) these should be shared with funders and through Gaddum's social media channels to celebrate the outcome we have achieved.
- 5.4.** Comments should be forwarded to relevant employees and SLT as appropriate so they can be explored, and responded to (either to the individual making the comment or in the interests of service development).
- 5.5.** See also 'Gifts and Gratuities' within the Finance Policy where a compliment may also be accompanied with a gift.

6. Concerns and Complaints: Key Principles

- 6.1.** It is a priority for Gaddum that concerns and complaints are resolved as quickly and effectively as possible. In most cases, the member of staff in which a concern was expressed to will do this through an informal response, the principle being that issues are best sorted out at the point of contact with our services, straight away.
- 6.2.** Complaints should be dealt with sensitively by an appropriate member of staff who has sufficient seniority to review the matter. This person will be allocated by the Business Systems Manager. All employees must be mindful of the stress and concern that is

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associated with making a complaint, and appropriate time must be made to allow a person to express their concern.

- 6.3. Employee must also be sensitive to matters relating to a complaint and empathise with complainants as much as is possible without predetermining the outcome of any complaint investigation. Sometimes a sincere apology, promptly delivered, with agreed remedial action may be what is needed to settle a complaint (refer to our '*Duty of Candour Policy*').
- 6.4. Both representatives of, and complainants to, Gaddum are advised that the organisation cannot accept responsibility or admit liability until a thorough investigation has been undertaken into any complaint.
- 6.5. Individuals raising concerns or complaints will be kept informed of the next appropriate steps, the progress being made with their issue, the assistance available to them, and have the assurance that any concerns or complaints raised will not affect the service or care being received/delivered.
- 6.6. Complaints will be considered as complaints against Gaddum and not against individual members of staff.

7. Concerns – process

- 7.1. In recognising that concerns will often be raised informally, Gaddum commits to deal with them as quickly and locally as possible; this is our 'first line' approach so that we can:
 - Resolve informal concerns quickly
 - Keep matters low-key i.e. ensure that people do not have to undergo formal complaints procedure if they do not want to.
 - Wherever possible, enable mediation between the complainant and the individual against whom the complaint or concern has been raised.

8. Informal resolution

- 8.1. Where a concern or complaint is being expressed, all Gaddum employees are expected to try to resolve issues as soon as possible in the best interests of all parties.
- 8.2. Where it is possible, the informal resolution approach may be a quicker and more practical approach to addressing concerns that may become complaints. If the person raising a concern or complaint is open to this route, the following steps apply to an informal resolution:

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- **The employee will listen**, without interrupting, to the person who is raising the concern or making the complaint and:
 - **Ask** questions to clarify
 - **Agree** a mutual understanding of the issue, including how the individual might wish to resolve the matter
 - **Identify** a reasonable and proportionate solution with the person
 - **Clarify** that the individual is satisfied with the agreed solution
 - **Implement** the solution – as soon as possible
 - **Follow up** and make sure resolution agreed has been effective
 - Keep a **record** of the matter throughout and send to Business Systems Manager when resolved
- 8.3. The concern or complaint will now be deemed to have been resolved. Concerns that are resolved through informal resolution and within one working day do not need to be logged beyond service level.

9. *Complaints – process*

9.1. Gaddum hopes that complaints can be dealt with through the process of an informal resolution. However, where a complaint is expressed as being formal, or where an informal resolution has not been possible, Gaddum will:

- deal with complaints promptly, politely, and, as appropriate, confidentially,
- respond in the right way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong; or provide information on any action taken (refer to '*Duty of Candour Policy*'),
- keep the complainant informed, as far as is reasonably practicable, on the progress of their complaint,
- learn from complaints, using them to improve our service, and inform any reviews of this document.

10. When to complain?

10.1. You should make your complaint within 12 months of the incident, or within 12 months of the matter coming to your attention. Depending on the type of incident and details of the complaint, Gaddum may extend this timeframe providing we are still able to conduct an investigation into the complaint.

11. *Stage One Complaint Process*

11.1. The organisation appreciates that communication preferences are very individual, and for that reason complaints can be made by:

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- Phone or verbally: in which case Gaddum's representative will take notes and follow steps at section 34, below, or
- Email or letter: in which case the person in receipt will forward as per section 34, below.
- Wherein the above formats are not possible, the complaint may be made in person, directly to a member of staff who must then inform their line manager immediately.

11.2. All complaints must be notified by the member of staff receiving it to their line manager and the Business Systems Manager. Every communication between the complainant and Gaddum should also be recorded and copied to the Business Systems Manager.

11.3. Stage One complaints will usually be delegated to the line manager responsible for whatever function is being complained about, unless a conflict of interest has been identified. If there is a conflict of interest, then it will be delegated to someone removed from the process but of the same or similar seniority.

11.4. Guideline examples are:

- A client is complaining about an interaction they had with a support worker: **that support worker's line manager will usually investigate**
- A beneficiary has not received a payment due to them for a grant they had been awarded: **the person line managing the administrator submitting bank payment runs will investigate**
- A member of the public complains about an interaction they had with a Gaddum representative: **the person line managing that representative will investigate**
- A client's partner complains about the state of Gaddum's facilities when supporting their partner to an appointment: **the person managing the waiting room will investigate**

11.5. Complaints must be acknowledged by the organisation to the complainant within two working days (if via post, then posted to the complainant by the end of two working days), setting out:

- What the areas of complaint have been identified as,
- Who will be investigating it,
- Whether we feel we need any additional information (including whether to meet with the complainant), and
- The date by which it is anticipated that the complaint will have been investigated

11.6. In respect of the date of conclusion, the organisation will take all steps to agree a mutual date by which this will have been resolved.

11.7. Notes will be kept of meetings; all telephone calls will be logged, and this information will be copied to the Business Systems Manager.



11.8. The complainant will be given a full written response to the complaint within twelve working days of receipt of the original complaint, wherever possible. When this is not possible, an explanation will be given in writing to the complainant within ten days with a proposed schedule for response.

11.9. The outcome of Stage One complaints will be monitored by the organisation as part of its quarterly Quality & Governance Framework.

11.10. The final response should include an explanation to the complainant of how to take their complaint to **Stage Two**, if they deem it necessary. All complaints will be treated as confidential and will be handled with sensitivity by the investigating manager.

12. Stage Two Complaint Process

12.1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the Stage One complaint outcome, they can request a Stage Two response within five working days in writing to complaints@gaddum.org.uk or other method they feel comfortable using. This request will need to outline what the complainant feels the Stage One complaint outcome has not dealt with and what their ongoing complaint is.

12.2. Stage Two complaints will be delegated to the line manager of the employee who undertook the Stage One investigation, unless a conflict of interest has been identified. If there is a conflict of interest, then it will be delegated to someone removed from the process but of the same or similar seniority.

12.3. The Business Systems Manager will log who is leading the Stage Two investigation, and the following process will then take place:

- The person leading the Stage Two will contact the complainant as soon as possible and;
 - provide their contact details,
 - arrange a time to discuss the complaint in more detail with the complainant, and
 - inform the complainant what the next steps are and anticipated timeframes to conclude the Stage Two matter

12.4. This should be done within 10 working days after the complainant has escalated the complaint to Stage Two. If this is going to be longer then the complainant should be informed of the likely timescales. In respect of the date of conclusion, the organisation will take all steps to agree a mutual date by which this will have been resolved.

- Findings will be documented and, if required, the investigation may need to reinterview relevant parties to clarify facts. It will also review the Stage One investigation in detail to clarify why all decisions were made, either upholding them or redeciding.

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- The complainant will then be contacted and informed of the outcome of the stage Two investigation. These should be via the complainant's preferred method of communication wherever possible, and confirmed in writing.

12.5. The outcome of Stage Two complaints will be monitored by the organisation as part of its quarterly Quality & Governance Framework. Furthermore, the Quality & Governance review will examine what details, if any, were missed by the Stage One investigation and whether lessons can be learned to ensure a more prompt and less stressful outcome for complainants in the future.

12.6. In respect of Gaddum Services commissioned by the NHS, the Stage Two response letter will be the final step, and therefore details of the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman must be provided to for the complainant to request a complaint handling review so as to ensure their concerns have been addressed.

12.7. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the Stage Two process, they can appeal to the Deputy Chief Executive (or Chief Executive where the Deputy Chief Executive has been involved in any of the previous stages).

13. Appeals - Process

13.1. Appeals must be made within five working days of the Stage Two outcome. The complainant must set out their reasons for appeal, their ongoing concerns, and any further information that will be relevant. Following this, steps in the Appeal process are as follows:

- The appeal request will be acknowledged within two working days by the person reviewing the appeal
- They will review the appeal request from the complainant and make arrangements to speak or meet with the complainant to discuss the matter
- They will then review the Stage One, Stage Two, and any other relevant information (such as the chronology of events)
- Where appropriate the person hearing the appeal will broaden the scope of the review to ensure a comprehensive and thorough decision into the appeal.

13.2. The person reviewing the appeal will inform the complainant with the final outcome as soon as possible, and usually within ten working days. Where this is not possible the complainant will be contacted and informed of the reasons and updated timeframe.

13.3. Appeals will be monitored by the organisation as part of its Charitable mission, duties and responsibilities under law and regulation, and the Chief Executive will inform the Board of Directors and regulators as appropriate.

13.4. The appeal stage is the final step in Gaddum's Complaints process. Where a complainant remains unsatisfied the Charity will take all steps possible to make the

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complainant aware of further recourse for their concerns, such as commissioning bodies, the Charity Commission, Companies House or others.

14. Vexatious and/or unreasonably persistent complainants

14.1. There may be occasions when a complainant repeatedly raises the same or similar issues despite having received a full and complete response(s) previously when explanations have been given and all reasonable attempts have been made to resolve their concerns.

14.2. These cases will be escalated to the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team (or above if the person receiving the complaint is in the same or a more senior role). These will be logged with the Business Systems Manager, reviewed within the organisation's Quality & Governance framework.

14.3. Gaddum has a Persistent and Vexatious Complainants Policy that is available on request.

15. Associated Policies

- Duty of Candour
- Persistent and Vexatious Complainants Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Serious and Untoward Incidents Policy
- Conflict of Interest
- Gifts and Gratuities
- Data Retention Policy

16. Legal Duties of complaints into Gaddum services commissioned by the NHS

16.1. As an organisation that is commissioned to provide some NHS services to patients, Gaddum must adhere to The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

16.2. Further information can be found by clicking the following link or typing the address into a browser:

- http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2009/309/pdfs/ukxi_20090309_en.pdf