



Royal College  
of Midwives

# complaints procedure

complaints from members

# What you think about us matters

**The RCM is committed to providing high quality services to its members and to protecting, influencing and supporting the midwifery profession and maternity support workers. However, we recognise that occasionally things do not go as planned, or that members may feel so disappointed with an issue that they wish to take the matter further. We are constantly seeking to improve and are eager to learn from our member's experiences.**

We have a feedback and complaints procedure which we hope will make it easy for our members to let us know what you think and to ensure we are open and transparent when you are unhappy with the services we provide.



# Principles

## **This procedure is governed by the following principles:**

- ▶ Anyone wishing to make a complaint should know how to do so and have ready access to the process.
- ▶ The RCM acknowledges and responds to complaints quickly, courteously and efficiently.
- ▶ The RCM investigates complaints thoroughly and takes appropriate measures where they are upheld.
- ▶ The RCM is open to constructive criticism and learns from complaints.
- ▶ The RCM ensures that staff and elected officers are competent to handle complaints professionally and are supported in doing so.



# Giving us feedback and complaining

**This procedure allows members of the RCM to complain about the service we provide or the conduct, actions or omissions of RCM staff and/or elected representatives.**

An informal complaint is when we have left you dissatisfied with any element of our products or services or any decision that we have made.

A formal complaint is where you believe that you have been unreasonably disadvantaged by a failure in any service or facility that we provided as a member benefit or as a consequence of action we have taken.

We hope most issues can be resolved quickly and locally with the person concerned and we encourage members to make early and direct contact with the member of staff providing the service or facility they are unhappy with to provide feedback. You can contact our staff through RCMConnect on 0330 303 0444.

**'We hope most issues can be resolved quickly and locally with the person concerned'**



# Stage 1 — informal complaint

## **Unless there are exceptional circumstances, there should be full discussion at the informal stage**

at the earliest possible opportunity with the aim of resolving the issue without the necessity of a formal complaint. Where appropriate, a personal interview to discuss and resolve the matter may be arranged.

Informal complaints will usually be dealt with by the member of staff, or representative to whom the complaint is made. The person receiving such a complaint may seek guidance from their line manager or, in an elected representative, either RCM staff or the appropriate elected officer, before responding.

If the person receiving the complaint judges they are not the appropriate person to deal with it, they may pass it on their line manager or the relevant elected officer.

The person who deals with an informal complaint must ensure that a record of the complaint and the response/outcome is filed with the Complaints Coordinator.

**'Informal complaints will usually be dealt with by the member of staff, or representative to whom the complaint is made'**



# Stage 2 — formal complaint

**If you feel the matter you have raised has not been adequately addressed or resolved or if you want to pursue a formal complaint, you can contact the RCM Complaints Coordinator and we will apply this formal complaints policy.**

This procedure is for handling formal complaints made by members of the RCM. A formal complaint is a complaint which:

- (a) Is made in writing<sup>1</sup>
  - (b) Is made by, or behalf of<sup>2</sup>, a person who is a member of the RCM but is not a member of the staff of the RCM<sup>3</sup>
1. On receiving your formal complaint, our Complaints Coordinator will get in touch with you to acknowledge receipt, to give you a copy of our Complaints Procedure and keep you informed if for any reasons there are delays in investigating and responding to you
  2. An Investigating Officer will be appointed, most usually the manager of the service, facility or work area that you are complaining about. They will make contact with you, preferably by telephone, to clarify any outstanding issues and determine whether your complaint can be easily resolved.
  3. If your complaint can not be easily resolved the Investigating Officer will explore the issues you have raised and provide a written response to you within 21 days. Their response will aim to satisfy your complaints, offer an explanation and apology where necessary and set out any actions to improve our services in the future.
  4. Where a formal complaint names a member of staff or a Workplace Representative (WPR) as being wholly or partly responsible for the matter complained of, the investigating officer will, at the earliest possible opportunity, give that member of staff/WPR a copy of the complaint. The named member of staff/WPR must provide the investigating officer with written comments on the complaint and her/his involvement in the matters complained of.
  5. The Investigating Officer will take the necessary steps to investigate the complaint. Where the Investigating Officer is satisfied that the complaint, or any aspect of it, is justified, they will decide on an appropriate course of action.  
  
The aim is to establish whether or not:
    - (a) There has been a failure or failures of the sort alleged in the complaint; and
    - (b) The member has been reasonably disadvantaged in consequence of the failure or failures alleged
  6. The substantive reply should include the following:
    - (a) A statement of each aspect of the complaint which has been investigated.
    - (b) In relation to each aspect, whether or not the complaint is upheld by the investigating officer.

<sup>1</sup>“Writing” includes electronic text communications.

<sup>2</sup> The RCM will only exceptionally and at the discretion of the CEO respond to enquiries by friends, relatives and other representatives of members.

<sup>3</sup> Members of staff of the RCM should use the appropriate employment policies and procedures



# Stage 2 — formal complaint

- (c) (i) If the complaint is upheld the substantive reply should include an apology for the failure and state any other remedy which the investigating officer considers appropriate in order to conclude the matter
  - (ii) If the complaint is not upheld the substantive reply should explain why.
- 7. If you are unhappy with the way we have reviewed and responded to your complaint you can ask for a review of the handling of it. This will not normally be a re-investigation of your original complaint, rather it will assess whether the initial investigation was fair and robust. If the review does conclude that the investigation was not conducted to the standards we expect we may commence a fresh investigation. The review of complaints will be undertaken by the Executive Director for Services to Members whose decisions are final.
- 8. The RCM Board will receive an annual report on the number and broad content of complaints received including outcomes and action taken. These will be anonymised.



# Scope and exclusions

This procedure applies to all RCM members. However, matters shall not be considered under this procedure if:

- (a) The complaint relates to an event that occurred more than two months prior to the date of the complaint being initially lodged (see Stage 1 – Informal complaints, paragraph (c) below;
- (b) The complaint relates to matters which have already been investigated in a previous complaint or are currently under investigation or are more appropriately investigated under a different procedure; and/or
- (c) The complaint is of a frivolous or vexatious nature; and/or
- (d) The complainant is not a member of the RCM; and/or
- (e) The complaint is made by a third party who is not the complainant. Submissions by third parties may only be considered if the third party is making submissions on behalf of the complainant and acting on the specific instructions of the complainant; and/or
- (f) The complaint is made anonymously, even if the complainant is a member of the RCM.

The union<sup>4</sup> may at its absolute discretion decline to deal with a complaint and any reasons for doing so will be recorded in writing and sent to the member.

<sup>4</sup> n this case, "The union" refers to the officer or official to whom the complaint has been addressed







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Published: November 2021  
[www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk)