

Feedback & Complaints

Policy

Applicable Company: Syncora

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Version Number: 1.0

Signed Off By: Care Governance Group

Review Cycle: Annually

Revision Date: 28/04/2025

Next Review Date: 28/04/2026

Policy Checklist Completed? Yes



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1. Change History

Version number	Change details	Date

2. Introduction

This policy sets out our approach towards customer feedback and complaints across all Syncora services.

We actively encourage all customer feedback, positive or negative, and we use this to help us drive continuous improvements to our services individually and as a collective. It is important to us that our customers have a voice in shaping the services we provide.

We encourage staff to have a positive approach, listen effectively, take responsibility, show empathy, use common sense, and make good decisions when providing solutions to customers concerns.

Customers can share their views and concerns in any way that suits them: by telephone, in person, email, letter, via social media, websites, comment cards and customer satisfaction surveys.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all feedback and complaints received across Syncora services.

A complaint can be made by a customer or person affected or likely to be affected by the actions or decisions of a Syncora service or employee. A complaint can also be made by someone acting on behalf of the customer or person, with their consent.

Where a complaint is solely related to the conduct of a Syncora employee, this will be referred directly to HR and may follow a different Policy and Procedure.

4. Principles

4.1 Aims & Objectives

- To give customers the opportunity to provide feedback in different ways whenever they need/want to.
- To make it easy for customers to report and for staff to resolve customer dissatisfactions and complaints.

- To have a clear approach on the handling and resolution of complaints that require an investigation.
- To learn from when things go wrong and take action to reduce the chance of recurrence.
- To achieve the regulatory, legislative and contractual requirements on complaint handling that apply to each business within Syncora.

4.2 Feedback

- Encouragement of Feedback: Services should actively encourage feedback from all users, including positive comments, suggestions, dissatisfactions and complaints. This helps identify areas of good practice and areas requiring improvement.
- Accessibility: Feedback mechanisms should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their disability, communication, health, or care needs.
- Fairness: Users should be assured that their feedback will be treated fairly and will not negatively impact the services they receive.
- Leadership: Syncora Governance & Assurance will lead in managing feedback and complaints, ensuring a consistent approach to quality improvement.

4.3 Dissatisfactions (informal complaints)

Even though we do our best in our roles, sometimes things go wrong and the important thing in those situations is how we deal with what has happened and that we learn from it.

A dissatisfaction is a concern which we are able to rectify immediately once identified, which doesn't require a formal complaint process and investigation.

These situations still need to be reported and recorded, with learning identified where possible so improvements can be implemented.

Some examples of dissatisfaction or informal complaints include:

- Actions that have caused an inconvenience, like being slightly late for an appointment, we will apologise and rectify the matter at the first point of contact.
- If we are unable to do things as quickly as our customers would like but have still provided the service within our service standard timeframes.

4.4 Complaints

If a customer raises a concern, we will try to put it right as soon as we know about it. We will assess the problem and if due to its complexity we are unable to put it right at the first point of contact, then a complaint case will be opened, and the matter investigated by an appropriate assigned person.

Examples of complaints that would result in an investigation include:

- Failure to follow our companies' own policies, procedures, or service standards
- Failure to provide the right care and support
- Any examples of malice, bias, inequality, or discrimination
- Unhelpful employee behaviour
- Delay or neglect to administrative or other processes
- Failure to consider all relevant information before reaching a decision
- Failure to fulfil any contractual responsibilities
- Any health and safety matters

The following policy statements explain how we will handle customer complaints across Syncora. Further details for employee processes are outlined in the Syncora Complaints Procedure.

Customer Complaints Policy Statements	
Process	All employees and managers are committed to taking responsibility and providing a common sense and customer focussed approach to handling and resolving customer complaints.
	Informal and formal complaints will be reported to Syncora Governance & Assurance for recording.
Accessibility	We provide a choice of accessible contact methods and publicise how customers can tell us about their concerns in the way that suits them, by telephone, in person, email, letter, via social media, websites, comment cards and customer satisfaction surveys.
	Complaints can be made in any language, as we provide translation and interpretation services.
Confidentiality	All customer information will be treated in the strictest of confidence in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
	Customers will be required to provide their verbal or written consent, before any of their personal information is shared with a person acting on their behalf, for example, a family member, friend.
Making a Complaint	Customers may ask a 3 rd party to deal with the complaint on their behalf, for example a Power of Attorney, a designated person like a local Councillor or an MP or a regulatory body like the Ombudsman.
	Support is available to help customers, or people representing customers, to make complaints. We would not ask a customer to put a complaint in writing.
	If a customer makes a complaint, it does not affect the customer's rights to use the services we provide.
	Our priority is to resolve a complaint at the first point of contact. If enquiries or problems are unable to be answered at this point, they will be passed to Syncora Governance & Assurance for processing and assigning to an appropriate investigating manager.
	A pool of investigating managers will be trained to investigate, respond to, and resolve complaints in an impartial manner. Management and G&A support is available to help employees when dealing with complaints.

Investigation	All responses will be reviewed and signed off by a Governance Manager prior to sharing with the customer.
	All complaints will be logged by Syncora Governance & Assurance for reporting purposes.
	To provide a fairer outcome for the customer, we may agree to allow more time to resolve complex complaints, although this should be in exceptional circumstances.
	We will keep the customer informed throughout the complaints investigation and will confirm the outcome of our findings at the end of the investigation, in writing.
Resolution	If a customer decides to seek legal advice in respect of a complaint, we will continue with the complaint through our normal procedures unless continuing would be prejudicial to any legal proceedings. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Director of the relevant service area.
	If we have failed to deliver a service which has had a detrimental impact on the customer, then we will always provide an apology as part of the response.
	If we feel that we have taken all reasonable measures to investigate and resolve the matters reported we may close persistent, unjustified complaints or any that are pursued unreasonably.
	For on-going dispute, we may suggest using mediation or other services to reach a positive outcome.
Performance and quality	We will quality check a proportion of closed complaints cases.
	We will carry out customer satisfaction surveys to gather feedback on how the complaint was handled.
	We will publish data on the volume of complaints, the reasons for the complaint and the action taken to resolve matters for the customer.
Learning	We recognise that customer complaints are an opportunity to learn from what our customers are saying, and they give us the chance to put something right for the customer.
	Learning from complaints will inform changes to services and policies and examples will be shared in staff training.
	We have systems in place to monitor and learn from customer complaints, to identify trends, the root causes of any service failures and the learning actions taken.
	The learning will be reported on and shared with staff, customers, and Board Members, to help inform changes to services and policies.

4.5 Complaint Stages

We aim to resolve complaints at the first point of contact, however, if that is not possible, then the following stages will apply.

Complaint Stage	What this involves:	Timeframes
Acknowledge	<p>If attempts to resolve the matter at the first point of contact have been exhausted, then the issue will be acknowledged as a Stage 1 Complaint. The acknowledgement needs to be in writing via email or letter depending on the preference of the complainant.</p> <p>In the event that attempts to contact the complainant remain unanswered for a period of seven (7) days, the complaint shall be placed on hold until such time as contact is successfully established. During this period, all associated timeframes will be suspended.</p>	Within 4 working days
Stage 1 Complaint	This is the complaint investigation and resolution stage where the outcome is agreed and communicated to the customer in writing. The learning actions are agreed and implemented.	Resolved within 28 working days
Stage 2 Appeal (Final Stage)	<p>If the customer is unhappy about the outcome of the Stage 1 complaint the customer can challenge this decision by raising an Appeal.</p> <p>The Appeal stage is the final stage in the Syncora process.</p>	<p>An Appeal must be received within 14 days of the complaint outcome.</p> <p>Appeals to be resolved within 28 working days</p>
Ombudsman	If the customer is unhappy with the outcome of the Appeal, they can take the complaint to the relevant Ombudsman or other recognised body. This process is outlined in the Syncora complaints procedure.	

**If the Stage 1 Complaint or Stage 2 Appeal is complex and more time is required to resolve the matter, then only with a good reason can we agree to extend this timeframe with the customer. Any extension must not exceed a further 10 working days. An example of a good reason could be to ensure a fairer outcome for the customer.*

4.6 Learning Actions

Customer feedback provides us with a wealth of information about how we are doing and that can be used to help us continually improve the services that we offer. It is important we learn from customer feedback; and that it is used to shape future service delivery and strategic decision-making.

We will:

- Analyse the root causes of customer dissatisfaction

- Share positive processes and best practice across Syncora
- Identify and implement learning actions from complaints to prevent similar occurrences arising in the future
- Use the learning to inform changes to policy, procedures, or systems
- Report on our complaints performance and learning from complaints on our websites and in annual reports
- Customer feedback will be 'themed' and reported on quarterly to the relevant Calico Board

4.7 Regulatory and Legal Compliance

This table shows the various regulatory bodies applicable to the relevant parts of Syncora. Please visit each website for the up-to-date regulatory guidance. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) www.hse.gov.uk applies to all services.

Company	Regulatory bodies / Accreditors
Calico Enterprise	www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-funding-agency www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted www.tsa-voice.org.uk www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-england
Acorn, Delphi, Syncora Care & Safenet	www.cqc.org.uk Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-england

5. Measures

Performance measures are monitored in the company performance report and reported to Board quarterly. This can include:

- The volume of feedback being recorded and the % of customers providing positive feedback
- The volume of and reasons for complaints and dissatisfactions
- % of complaints upheld following investigation
- % of customers appealing their complaint response
- Results of audits to assess adherence to the policy

6. Linked Information

Related strategies, policies and procedures:

- The Humanitarian Offer – Calico Group Customer Strategy
- Syncora Complaints Procedure
- Syncora Feedback Procedure

- Duty of Candor Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy

7. Review

Policy to be reviewed annually unless changes in legislation/regulation need this to happen sooner.

