

Our Aim

Groundwork North East & Cumbria is committed to providing the best possible support to all our service users. We believe that your feedback is invaluable in helping us to improve our services and enhance the overall participant experience. Whether you have had a positive experience, have suggestions for improvement, or wish to share concerns, we encourage you to let us know. Your feedback helps us make informed decisions and take meaningful action to ensure our services remain effective, inclusive, and responsive to your needs.

We aim to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy and straightforward as possible
 - We treat all complaints as clear expressions of dissatisfaction requiring a timely and appropriate response
 - Complaints are dealt with promptly, politely, and confidentially where appropriate
 - We respond in the right way — with an explanation, an apology if something has gone wrong, and a clear outline of corrective action
 - We learn from complaints and use them to continuously improve our services
 - We review our complaints policy and procedures on an annual basis
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Compliments and Feedback

We also welcome compliments and general feedback about the service you have received.

You can share a compliment by:

- Speaking directly to a member of staff
- Emailing us at advice@groundwork.org.uk
- Writing to the address provided in Stage Two of this document

All compliments are recorded and shared with relevant staff and managers to celebrate good practice and support continuous improvement.

Informal Complaints

We recognise that many concerns can be resolved quickly and informally.

Our aims are to:

- Resolve informal concerns as soon as possible
- Keep matters low-key and constructive
- Encourage open communication and mediation between you and the staff member involved

If an informal approach does not resolve your concern, or if the issue is serious or sensitive, the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Introduction

Definition:

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with Groundwork North East & Cumbria, a member of staff, or the delivery of the General Information, Advice & Guidance or Healthier & Wealthier services, which requires a formal response.

Purpose:

The formal complaints procedure ensures that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently, and wherever possible, to your satisfaction.

Responsibilities

Groundwork North East & Cumbria will:

- Acknowledge your formal complaint in writing
- Respond within an agreed timeframe
- Deal with your complaint reasonably, sensitively, and confidentially
- Take appropriate action where necessary

You (the complainant) are asked to:

- Raise your complaint in writing within 8 weeks of the issue arising
- Explain the problem clearly and fully, including any previous action taken
- Allow reasonable time for Groundwork to investigate and respond
- Recognise that some circumstances may be beyond our control

Support with your complaint:

If you need help making your complaint, you may ask a friend, family member, support worker, or independent advocate to act on your behalf.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Complaints will be handled with discretion and confidentiality wherever possible.

Information will only be shared with staff directly involved in resolving the complaint.

Groundwork North East & Cumbria handles all personal data in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and our internal Data Protection Policy.

If confidentiality cannot be maintained (for example, for safeguarding or legal reasons), this will be explained to you.

Monitoring and Reporting

Groundwork North East & Cumbria will maintain anonymised records of all complaints and their resolutions. These records will be regularly reviewed to identify trends, improve service quality, and inform staff training and development.

Formal Complaints Procedure

All complaints will be taken seriously and managed with care and sensitivity.

The timeframes below will be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances — if so, you will be notified in writing.

If you wish to make a complaint after leaving the IAG or Healthier & Wealthier service, it must be submitted formally (as outlined in Stage Two) within one month of the incident.

Stage One – Informal Resolution

Raise your complaint informally with the Project Support Officer.

They will investigate and discuss the issue with you.

You can contact them via:

0330 441 6515

- You should receive a response within 5 working days, along with a proposed solution or action plan.
- If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage, or if your complaint concerns that staff member, you can proceed to **Stage Two**.

Stage Two – Formal Complaint

If the issue remains unresolved, please submit a **formal written complaint** to:

Regional Advice Manager

Post: Groundwork North East & Cumbria, 14 Parsons Court, Welbury Way, Newton Aycliffe, Co. Durham DL5 6ZE

Email: advice@groundwork.org.uk

Include:

- Your name and contact details
- The service you are accessing (General Information, Advice & Guidance or Healthier & Wealthier)
- The name(s) of any staff involved
- A clear description of your complaint and any previous discussions or actions

You will receive a written acknowledgment and a response within 10 working days.

If your complaint requires more time to investigate, you will be informed of the revised timescale and reason.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may escalate your complaint to Stage Three within two months.

If no further contact is made within three months, the complaint will be considered closed.

Stage Three – Senior Management Review

If you wish to escalate your complaint, please write to:

Vicky Wood

Project Manager

Post: Groundwork North East & Cumbria. Unit 14, The Greenhouse, Amos Drive, Greencroft Industrial Park, County Durham DH9 7XN

Email: vicky.wood@groundwork.org.uk

Your complaint will be acknowledged within **5 working days**.

A full investigation will be carried out, and a written response provided within **10 working days**.

If more time is required, you will be informed of the expected timescale and reasons.

If unresolved, you may proceed to **Stage Four**.

Stage Four – Final Review

If you remain dissatisfied after Stage Three, you may escalate your complaint in writing to:

Craig Drummond

Employment Programmes Manager

Post: Groundwork North East & Cumbria. Unit 14, The Greenhouse, Amos Drive, Greencroft Industrial Park, County Durham DH9 7XN

Email: craig.drummond@groundwork.org.uk

You will receive an acknowledgment within **5 working days**, and a **final written decision** within **10 working days**.

The outcome at this stage is **final**, and you will receive a full explanation in writing.

Learning and Continuous Improvement

Groundwork North East & Cumbria views all feedback and complaints as opportunities to learn and improve.

Outcomes and lessons from complaints are shared with relevant managers and used to strengthen service delivery, training, and participant experience.

Accessibility

This policy is available in alternative formats (e.g. large print, easy read, or another language) upon request.

Please contact advice@groundwork.org.uk or call **0330 441 6515** for assistance.
