

## Vexatious Complaints Policy

### 1. Objective

This policy outlines the procedures and measures in place to address and manage vexatious complaints within Healthwatch West Sussex. A vexatious complaint is defined as a complaint that is made with the primary intention of causing disruption, annoyance, or harassment without genuine grounds for complaint.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals, including customers, clients, employees, and any other stakeholders engaging with Healthwatch West Sussex.

### 3. Definition

A vexatious complaint is characterized by one or more of the following:

**Repetition:** The complainant repeatedly raises the same or similar issues, even after thorough investigations and resolutions have been provided.

**Baselessness:** The complaint lacks a factual basis or is made with the intent to deceive, manipulate, or cause harm without genuine cause for concern.

**Harassment:** The complainant engages in abusive, offensive, or threatening behaviour towards Healthwatch West Sussex's staff or representatives.

### 4. Procedure

#### 4.1. Initial Assessment

Upon receiving a complaint, the Healthwatch West Sussex Manager, in consultation with the relevant Help & Care Director and Head of Governance, will conduct an initial assessment to determine its validity and whether it falls within the definition of vexatious and consider whether communication with this person should be ended.

#### 4.2 Communication

If a complaint is deemed vexatious, Healthwatch West Sussex will communicate this decision to the complainant in writing, clearly stating the reasons for categorizing the complaint as vexatious.

#### 4.3 Ceasing Communication

Healthwatch West Sussex reserves the right to cease further communication with the complainant regarding the vexatious complaint. However, essential communications related to other matters will continue as necessary.

**4.4 Record Keeping**

All correspondence related to vexatious complaints, including documentation of the initial assessment and communication with the complainant, will be securely recorded and maintained for reference.

**4.5 Escalation**

In cases where the vexatious behaviour persists, Healthwatch West Sussex may take appropriate legal or regulatory actions, including seeking restraining orders or reporting the behaviour to relevant authorities.

**4.6 Appeals**

While vexatious complaints typically do not warrant an appeal process, Healthwatch West Sussex will consider appeals in exceptional circumstances, such as new evidence emerging or if there are concerns about procedural fairness.

**5. Review**

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Amendments may be made as necessary.

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