Alexanders

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Complaints Procedure

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1. Aims

Alexanders Funeral Care aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from clients, visitors and others to the funeral home.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Treat complainants with respect
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into the funeral home's improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

Alexanders Funeral Care will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on our website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in NAFD resolve and SAIF consumer protection scheme

3. Definitions and scope

The following guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint.

A **concern** is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought".

The funeral home will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A **complaint** is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action".

Alexanders Funeral Care intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

Complaints about services provided by other providers or facilities the client may use, should be directed to the provider concerned.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- ➢ Follow these procedures
- ➢ Co-operate with the Alexanders Funeral Care throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- ➢ Treat all those involved with respect
- ➢ Not publish details about the complaint on social media

The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint, and establish the facts. They will:

- ➢ Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- ➢ Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- ➢ Prepare a comprehensive report to the managing director or business manager which includes the facts and potential solutions

The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- ➢ The managing director or business manager
- ➢ The complaints co-ordinator will:

- ➢ Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- ➢ Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members
- ➢ Be aware of issues relating to:
- ➢ Sharing third party information
- ➢ Additional support needed by complainants, for example interpretation support
- ➢ Keep records
- ➢ Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

NB - Covert recordings of staff or meetings will not be accepted as evidence.
Whilst the funeral home understands that recording audio conversations is not illegal under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), it discourages all clients, visitors and staff from recording any audio conversation. If a recording is made and then subsequently made available to a third party, Alexanders Funeral Care would look at taking legal advice and / or putting in place temporary restrictions on how the client is able to communicate with the funeral home i.e only via email / only face to face meetings with a minute taker.
In line with our Client Code of Conduct, clients should not make any audio recordings on the funeral home.
If a member of staff becomes aware that a recording has been made by a client or visitor, then they will speak to the business manager/ managing director for further sanctions to be followed. Alexanders Funeral Care may then discuss this further with client/visitor.
In relation to the complaints policy, complainants should obtain the informed consent of all parties before recording conversations or meetings, and that the funeral home reserves the right to refuse permission for a complainant to use a recording that has been obtained covertly in the complaints process.
In addition, if clients wanted to record a meeting with staff, the decision would be made by the managing director.
Covert recordings of phone conversations should not be made by clients/visitors.

This is to ensure:

- ➢ **A respectful and open dialogue between clients/visitors and staff**
- ➢ **The privacy and confidentiality of everyone involved**
- ➢ **That discussions take place in a safe and trusted environment**
- ➢ **If a client or visitor wishes to keep a record of a meeting, please speak to a member of the management team beforehand. Notes can be shared upon request to ensure clarity and understanding.**
- ➢ **We appreciate your cooperation in supporting a positive and professional community.**

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- ➢ What has happened
- ➢ Who was involved
- ➢ What the complainant feels would put things right

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.
Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.
Alexanders Funeral Care expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than 3 months afterwards. We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

6. Stages of complaint

Stage 1: raising concerns/complaints

Concerns should initially be brought to the attention of a member of staff either in person or over the telephone. An informal meeting may be arranged with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with the concern.
The funeral home encourages clients and visitors to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.
Alexanders Funeral Care takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.
If the complaint is about a member of staff, it should be raised with the managing director or business manager either in person or in writing, and a meeting can be arranged to discuss the issue at hand.
Covert recordings of staff or meetings will not be accepted as evidence.

Stage 2: informal

If a person is not happy with the way a concern has been dealt with at stage 1, or feels that the issue is serious enough to warrant it, they should contact the managing director or business manager and explain the nature of the complaint, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the funeral home's main office.
Alexanders Funeral Care will acknowledge informal complaints within 7 days, and investigate and provide a response within 15 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If there are exceptional circumstances, you will be notified of this and told when a substantive response can be expected.
The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the managing director/business manager.
If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.
Covert recordings of staff or meetings will not be accepted as evidence.

Stage 3: formal

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint into writing, usually to the managing director. This letter should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact Alexanders Funeral Care main office (telephone 01472 355255 or email alexandersfuneralcare1@yahoo.co.uk).

The managing director will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 days.

The managing director (or business manager) will call a meeting to clarify concerns, and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the funeral home of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the funeral home may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, Alexanders Funeral Care will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The managing director will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 15 working days.

How to escalate a complaint

If the complaint is still unresolved, the complainant can escalate the complaint by informing the managing director within 15 working days.

The managing director will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 21 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the Managing Director in writing within 15 working days.

Covert recordings of staff or meetings will not be accepted as evidence.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The complainant and the funeral home representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and funeral home representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The managing director must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The managing director will also provide a copy of the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint.

The outcome:
The managing director can:

- ➢ Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- ➢ Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the managing director will:

- ➢ Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- ➢ Where appropriate, recommend changes to the funeral home's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The funeral home will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 15 working days.
Covert recordings of staff or meetings will not be accepted as evidence.

7. Referring complaints on completion of the funeral home's procedure
If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the funeral home's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the NAFD Resolve or the SAIF consumer protection scheme.

If the funeral home's complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the funeral home will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.
If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the funeral home's complaints procedure and the complaint is regarding the funeral home not meeting standards set by the NAFD/SAIF in any of the following areas, the complainant can refer their complaint to NAFD Resolve or the SAIF consumer protection scheme:

- ➢ Funeral home premises
- ➢ Staff suitability
- ➢ Making information available to clients

8. Persistent complaints
Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with Alexanders Funeral Care after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the managing director has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the managing director or business manager will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.
If the complainant subsequently contacts the funeral home about the same issue, the funeral home can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- ➢ Alexanders Funeral Care has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, and
- ➢ The complainant has been given a clear statement of the funeral home's position and their options (if any), *and*
- ➢ The complainant is contacting the funeral home repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.
The funeral home will be most likely to choose not to respond if:

- ➢ We have reason to believe the individual is contacting Alexanders Funeral Care with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, and/or
- ➢ The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, and/or
- ➢ The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, Alexanders staff

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.
Once the managing director has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email. 10

Alexanders Funeral Care will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the funeral home acts reasonably.

Unreasonably persistent complaints
For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a client/visitor or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the funeral home and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:
• actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
• prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint
• an insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes
• an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner
• an insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the academy because it is unlawful.

For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as above in such a way that they:
• appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of Alexanders staff
• cause on-going distress to individual member(s) of Alexanders staff
• have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the academy community
• are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

Alexanders Funeral Care's Actions in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment

In the first instance, Alexanders Funeral Care will verbally inform the complainant that his/her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable/unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy. This will be confirmed in writing.

If the behaviour is not modified, Alexanders Funeral Care will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the funeral home's community:

• inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the funeral home to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy

• inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties

• inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to Alexanders should be by letter only

• (in the case of physical or verbal aggression) consider warning the complainant about being banned from the funeral home.

• proceed straight to a temporary ban.

• consider taking advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation

• Reporting violent and threatening behaviour or behaviour which harasses any member of staff or shows discrimination to any member of staff to the police.

If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the funeral home may resume the process identified above at an appropriate level.

9. Record-keeping

Alexanders Funeral Care will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint.

This is except by request or under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during an inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and records management policy.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the managing director, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

10. Learning lessons

Alexanders Funeral Care will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the managing director, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the funeral home can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The managing director and business manager will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. They will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11. The complaints records are logged and managed by the managing director and business manager. This policy will be reviewed by the business manager every year**.**

12. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Data protection policy
- Privacy notices
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures

Policy dated: July 2025
Next review date: July 2026