



**HEAR US**  
Croydon's Mental Health Service Users Group  
[www.hear-us.org](http://www.hear-us.org)  
[AQS@hear-us.org](mailto:AQS@hear-us.org)  
020 8681 6888

# Hear Us

## QUALITY MANUAL



## SECTION F: MEETING CLIENTS' NEEDS

### F.1.9 Client Charter - Service Standards

Agreed Date: 21/01/2022

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**Hear Us**  
Orchard House  
15a Purley Road  
South Croydon  
CR2 6EZ

Telephone: 020 8681 6888  
Email: [AQS@hear-us.org](mailto:AQS@hear-us.org)  
Website: [www.hear-us.org](http://www.hear-us.org)  
Registered in England No. 6891337  
Charity No.1135535



## Hear Us

To promote, educate, communicate and empower, for the benefit and interest of people affected by mental health issues

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At Hear Us we:

- Promote positive mental health,
- Actively challenge discrimination and promote a culture of dignity and respect for all,
- Adopt evidence-based policies and best practices.

The Hear Us Welfare Surgeries Project provides free, confidential, impartial advice and (short-term) casework and/or support to people with serious mental illness living in the London Borough of Croydon.

The mental health community currently face many challenges in areas such as social care, health, welfare and other benefits and employment and education, which means there is a high demand for our service.

We have thought carefully about what we offer the people who contact us to make sure that we can respond to as many people who need our help as possible.

Hear Us respond to enquiries by phone (020 8681 6888), email ([surgery@hear-us.org](mailto:surgery@hear-us.org)), through our website, in person and by letter.

### **Offering Information, Advice or Support Responding to initial enquires**

We will respond to enquiries in the following ways:

- We may be able to answer your query immediately by providing you with some information but might have to arrange another suitable time to discuss.
- We may require more information to properly assess your situation.
- After we have assessed your situation, we will provide you with relevant information and advice or allocate your case to a Welfare Surgeries Advisor in line with our case allocation policy.
- If, after an initial discussion/assessment, we believe we can take on your case, we may arrange a time at a later date to discuss your case with you in more detail.

Our key areas of information/advice/support are:

- 1) Welfare benefits
- 2) Mental Health Services
- 3) Housing



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We may be able to offer advice in other key areas. We will clearly let you know whether we have the expertise or capacity to take on your case and offer support.

### **What we do not do**

We do not advise on every area of advice, (debt management for example) so may not always be the best people to offer support. If this is the case, we can usually signpost you to other services that may be more appropriate/suitable in your case.

We will let you know how to refer yourself to external organisations, or, where appropriate, we will make a referral on your behalf (with your agreement).

### **We aim to provide excellent customer service**

Like our clients, Hear Us staff and volunteers juggle caring responsibilities, family commitments and their own mental health challenges. Where team members are working flexible hours or shorter weeks, we will keep you informed and ensure that, where necessary, your casework is covered when they are not available, as much as is possible.

We will:

- Respond to referrer (if not self-referral),
- Respond with an acknowledgement to your original enquiry within 5 working days taking into account the urgency of referral,
- Do what we say we're going to and when we're going to do it,
- Be clear and specific about timescales (i.e. DWP deadlines, tribunal dates etc),
- Reply to emails, online forms and letters within 10 working days (taking into account urgency of query/correspondence),
- Answer the telephone promptly wherever possible and respond to answerphone messages within 5 working days (taking into account urgency of query),
- Give our name when answering the telephone,
- Be polite, courteous and helpful, and show every client respect,
- Work in an empowering, non-judgemental and respectful way.

### **We aim to provide an accessible service**

We will:

- Take into account your individual preferences and needs and make reasonable adjustments to meet these,



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- Communicate clearly, using plain English, taking into account any communication barriers,
- Offer information in accessible formats (i.e. in languages other than English, large print),
- Offer access to interpreters in your preferred/chosen language (including BSL),
- Offer free taxis to appointments where other means of transport are inappropriate/unsuitable,
- **Not** charge for any service we provide or pass on any costs to you. Our telephone number is standard network rate and we will call you back if need us to/if you would prefer.

**Please note: We are not responsible for costs other services may charge (i.e. supporting letter from GP) but will inform you of any costs that we are aware of.**

### Flexibility

We will be flexible in the way we work with you, which is suitable for your needs (i.e. telephone, virtually (Microsoft Teams/Zoom), in person at our office, in your home or in an alternative setting - where possible and where service capacity allows whilst balancing the needs of other clients).

You can have someone with you at appointments for support, like a family member, care coordinator, support worker, or advocate – keeping confidentiality and safeguarding issues in mind.

*(please refer to our Accessibility Policy/Statement for more details)*

### We aim to provide accurate information and advice you can trust

We will:

- Make sure that our staff and volunteers have the right support and training they need to provide timely and accurate information and advice,
- Make sure staff and volunteers keep up to date with changes in the Welfare Benefits system.

### We aim to provide a safe, confidential and trustworthy service

We will:

- Ensure all our staff and volunteers have appropriate checks performed by the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers maintain confidentiality and keep your personal data secure.



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- We will work with you in a safe, confidential and appropriate setting.

*(please refer to our Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy for more details)*

### **Access to your records**

Under General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) you have the right to obtain a copy of your personal data some of which could be sensitive.

If you would like to see a copy of the data, we hold please ask a member of the team who will supply you with a copy of any relevant policies and procedures and process your request (£10 admin fee for access to records may apply).

### **We aim to continually improve our service to you**

We will:

- Work to involve those who use our services in developing our services,
- Monitor our performance using the data we collect. We will include feedback and evaluation from surveys,
- Act on the feedback we receive,
- Use clear policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed, to help ensure everyone receives an excellent service,
- Gather anonymised data about the advice and support we provide and use that data to monitor trends and try to influence locally and nationally to improve the lives of people with mental illness.

### **What We Ask Of You**

Please behave in a way which is respectful of Hear Us staff, volunteers and other clients/service users.

Please be open and honest with staff to enable them to assist you in the best possible way.

Please carry out any actions agreed with you in the agreed timescales and tell us as soon as possible if your circumstances change.

### **Paperwork**

We may need to see and take copies of some of your original documents, for example, a letter from the DWP. We will give you back all your original paperwork.



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Please try and visit our office only when you have an appointment booked. If you visit the office without an appointment and a member of staff is available we will try and see you and respond to your query. However, due to prior booked appointments or other reasons, we may have to ask you to come back another time.

### **Cancelling appointments**

We understand that sometimes you may not be able to attend an agreed/scheduled appointment for a number of reasons. We kindly ask that you please let us know either by texting, calling or emailing if you are unable to attend an appointment as soon as you can.

If you miss/cancel/rearrange more than 5 consecutive appointments, we may not be able to continue supporting you and working on your case due to the high demand for our service and our funder requirements.

### **Complaints procedure**

Hear Us is committed to providing a high-quality service to all our clients and service users.

If you have a complaint, we need you to tell us about it. You can find out more about how to make a complaint in our complaints policy (on our website [www.hear-us.org](http://www.hear-us.org)).



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Version #	Author	Date	Version Notes
HU-V1	Claire Hawkes	08/10/2021	New Policy
HU-V2	Claire Hawkes	8/10/2021	Second version
HU-V3	Eleanor Yates	22/10/2021	Grammatical corrections and suggestions
HU-V4	Tim Oldham	21/01/2022	Minor changes and web address correction