

Complaints procedure

Introduction

This policy sets out the procedures we will follow when we receive a complaint from users of our service, from another organisation or a member of the public. It does not address complaints made by staff or volunteers - these are dealt with through grievance and disciplinary procedures.

The definition of staff for the purpose of this complaints procedure covers workers, employees, consultants, advisors, sessional workers and volunteers who work with Become from time to time on projects.

The procedure is meant to provide a means to resolve a dispute between Become and any external complainant.

Statement

Become aims to provide a standard of service acceptable to all those we deal with. If we fail to do this we want to know about it. This will enable us not only to deal with the specific problem, but also to avoid it happening again.

Dealing with complaints

When someone wishes to register a complaint, the following procedure should be adopted.

The complaint should be received either via completion of a complaints form or by a request to make a verbal complaint. The Chief Executive must be informed when a complaint is being made.

Stage 1

The complainant should be invited to speak to the appropriate internal manager to discuss the complaint. This can be done in person or by phone, whichever is appropriate.

The manager must keep a record of the conversation on the complaints monitoring form. The manager will endeavour to resolve the matter.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, or where it is not possible to use stage 1 (e.g. if it is not convenient to phone or visit the office) then refer to stage 2.

Stage 1 should be completed within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.

Stage 2

The complainant should be asked to put any complaint in writing to the manager, marked 'Private and Confidential', providing as much detail as possible.

If the complainant is not able to put the complaint in writing, the complainant will be offered an interview with the manager or his/her nominee.

The role of the manager or nominee at this meeting will be confined to putting the complaint in writing, obtaining the complainant's approval of the written complaint, and

asking the complainant to sign to indicate agreement with the contents. The complainant may choose to work with a third party.

The manager will then investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it. The manager may delegate any aspect of the investigation to a nominee.

If the complaint involves a member(s) of staff the manager should offer the opportunity for the member of staff to put forward their account, either by written statement or by presentation at a meeting.

The manager will ensure that all complainants receive a response in writing within ten working days of the letter/complaint notes being received. This letter will summarise what investigations have been carried out and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter. A copy of this letter should be attached to the complaints form.

If a response by letter is unsuitable, the complainant will be offered an interview with the manager to provide the response verbally. This meeting should be held within ten working days. A written record of this interview will be kept and should be signed by the complainant.

If the complainant is not satisfied at this stage they should ask for the matter to be dealt with under Stage 3 of the complaints procedure.

*Stage 2 should be completed within **14** working days.*

Stage 3

Where the matter is not resolved by stage 2, the manager should immediately refer the complaint to the Chief Executive, forwarding copies of all written correspondence to them.

The Complaints Panel will comprise the **Chief Executive, a trustee and an independent representative**. The independent representative will either be a volunteer HR advisor (an employment law specialist) or an HR professional from another charity.

The complainant will be informed immediately by the Chief Executive about what is being done and informed that they (the Chief Executive) will also be contacting the staff member(s), against whom the complaint is made.

The Chief Executive will review the decision made at Stage 3 and may seek further clarification from any of the parties involved.

*Stage 3 should be completed within **28** working days.*

The Complaints Panel will notify the complainant of its decisions and the reasons for its decisions within 15 working days of having received notice of the complaint. The Panel's decision will be final. The Chief Executive will be responsible for ensuring records of the meeting are kept and that the complaints monitoring form is completed.

Recording and monitoring complaints

All complaints will be recorded and kept on file, including those which were resolved without being put in writing. All complaints will be treated in confidence.

Publicising the procedure

All managers are responsible for ensuring that all external parties, as appropriate, are aware that we have a complaints procedure.

Date procedure was agreed: _____

Date of review: _____

Person responsible for review _____