



*The untold stories of
Relatives, Victims, and Survivors*



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Complaints Policy

Relatives for Justice has a responsibility to help ensure a working environment in which the dignity of all service users and employees are respected.

Relatives for Justice will seek to address valid complaints promptly and effectively. In instances where after thorough investigation Relatives for Justice deems the complaint made to be frivolous or malicious, Relatives for Justice reserves the right to take disciplinary action against the complainant.

The Board of Directors will be supportive and will act promptly to any service users who makes a complaint and will provide clear advice on the procedures to be implemented. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times and ensure there is no further problem or any victimisation after a complaint has been resolved.

Types of complaint:

Comments: Where someone does not wish their expression of views to be labelled as a complaint but would like their comments to be notes and acted upon, this request should be respected.

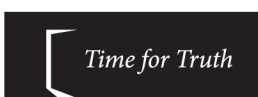
Anonymous Complaints: This should be reported immediately to the Deputy Director, in instances where the complaint is directed towards the Deputy Director, the complaint should be reported to the Director.

Complaints via the media: In the event of a call from the media, the call should be directed to the Deputy Director:

- In turn the Deputy Director will inform the Director, the Director will inform the Board of Directors at the earliest opportunity.
- Contact the media and ascertain the journalist involved exists.
- Contact the journalists' editor and confirm details and the nature of the complaint.
- If a statement is necessary, it should be drafted by the Board of Directors.

Informal Complaints: Informal complaints are complaints, which are made by word of mouth. Complainants are encouraged to make complaints, initially informally. Where possible, an informal complaint will be acknowledged and resolved immediately by the person who receives it, or by the Deputy Director, or alternatively and only where appropriate another member of staff. They will endeavour to try to ascertain what the

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complainant hopes to achieve as a result of the complaint. A co-operative problem-solving approach should mean that most complaints are effectively dealt with this way. All complainants should be offered the opportunity to make a complaint formal.

Formal Complaints: Formal complaints are those, which are made in writing or recorded in writing on the complainant's behalf. A formal complaint arises when:

- A complaint is initially made in writing.
- Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the response to their informal complaint. In this instance, they are invited to make a formal complaint in writing in order to request further investigation and action.

Nature of Complaints: Complaints about Relatives for Justice

- Complaints about services or administration
- Complaints about staff/sessional workers involved in the project/services
- Complaints from members of the public, media etc. who are in contact with Relatives for Justice

An analysis of all the complaints received will be made to the Board of Directors on an annual basis, and they will address the need for policy change.

Implementation: The Deputy Director has the specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. We expect all our employees to abide by the policy and help create a harmonious working environment in which the dignity of all is respected.

In order to implement this policy, Relatives for Justice will ensure that:

The policy is communicated to all our employees/sessional workers'/service users through induction training, team briefings, management training, staff handbooks and by ensuring it is displayed on notice boards with Relatives for Justice buildings.

Procedures for dealing with complaints: The complaints procedures have been structured to take account of the fact that complaints may be made informally or formally. Prior to dealing with a complaint, procedures must be checked.

Listening: The individual who first hears a complaint has a vital role to play. Listening at an early stage as to what is being said is often needed. Once you know what the complaint is you may be able to deal with it immediately – for example by offering guidance or information. The complainant should be given all information they need about the complaint's procedure.

Information: It is essential at all stages to give the complainant a clear explanation of their rights and of the way complaints can be dealt with according to our policy. They should be told that they will be kept informed of progress in dealing with their complaint at all times.

Referring: If you are unable to deal with the complaint by offering guidance or information, the complaint should be referred to the Deputy Director for further action.

Investigating: The investigation of all complaints will be carried out in a fair, polity, impartial and confidential manner. The overall aim being to resolve problems at the earliest stage possible. In order to reach the solution of a complaint the individual receiving the complaint may need to gather information from service users/members of staff/sessional workers and or volunteers.

Service Users: In gathering information from service users, the Deputy Director must explain the complaints procedure and ensure that they take an impartial approach.

Staff: In gathering information from the staff the Deputy Director must explain the complaints procedure is distinct from disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Sessional Workers: In gathering information from sessional workers the Deputy Director must explain the complaints procedure is distinct from disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Volunteers: In gathering information from volunteers the Deputy Director must ensure that the volunteer understand the complaints Policy. The Deputy Director must also explain that the complaints procedure is distinct from the disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Response: Response to all complaints will normally include:

- An acknowledgement (verbal or written) of regret that the complainant feels dissatisfied as soon as is possible.
- An explanation of the investigation process (where applicable).
- An explanation of how these complaints have been or will be remedied, and when and how changes can be checked or reviewed.
- A check that the complainant is satisfied.
- An indication of how the matter can be pursued further if the complainant is not satisfied.
- An initial response must be made within 5 working days.
- A formal response must be made within 2 weeks.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome: If the complaint is not dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant, it can be referred to the Board of Directors who will further review the complaint.

Recording: It is vital that all complaints are recorded.

Unfounded complaints: If a complaint against a staff member/sessional worker is shown after investigation to be unfounded, this outcome will be recorded with the complaint to show the outcome of the investigation and signed by the Deputy Director. The staff member/sessional worker should be informed and assured that their employment record will be unaffected by the incident.

Authorised by Management Committee on:

Signed: _____
Chairperson *Date*

Signed: _____
Secretary *Date*