



## Complaints Procedure

- 1.1 We take complaints seriously. Complaints give us the opportunity to put things right and the lessons learned can often influence our practices.
- 1.2 It is hoped that user dissatisfaction can be remedied on an informal basis. Some people, however, prefer to pursue their complaint on an official footing. The service, therefore, has a structure to ensure that all complaints from users are handled within the same framework.
- 1.3 The complaints process is for all complaints – or expressions of dissatisfaction – from users, including those who have tried, but failed, to access the service. It does not cater for disgruntled third parties and the like – but elements of it and the principles involved may be used to deal with other sorts of complaints.

### 2.0 Complaints Procedure for users

- 2.1 The Complaints Procedure is explained below. Users may write, email or telephone the CEO using the contact details given.
- 2.2 The procedure follows defined stages. Each stage is the responsibility of a different individual and each stage has a timetable.

### 3.0 Stage One: review by CEO

- 3.1 Once a complaint has been received, a letter of acknowledgement must be sent to the complainant within 5 working days. The complainant must be told who is dealing with the complaint, what action is being taken, and when s/he can expect to receive a full reply - the target time for responding in full to a complaint is 20 working days.

- 3.2 The CEO should maintain a separate complaints monitoring file. Everything related to the complaint should be kept apart from the any other file that may relate to the complainant, and all correspondence relating to the complaint should be attached to this separate file. The "complaints file" is strictly private and is not to be shown to the user.
- 3.3 The CEO should undertake the investigation – or oversee it if carried out by another member of staff. Where the complaint is against the CEO, the Chair or a designated member of the Trustee Board will need to investigate, in effect jumping straight to Stage Two. This may require an interview with the complainant or a member of staff or volunteer.
- 3.4 Once the investigation is complete, a letter detailing its findings should be sent to the complainant. If the matter is complex and will take longer than originally indicated, write to the complainant explaining the reasons why and including an indication of when a response can be expected.
- 3.5 The full response must contain sufficient information to assure the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously. If the complaint is upheld, the complainant must be given a full apology for their experience and given details, as far as possible, of what is being done to prevent a recurrence of the situation.
- 3.6 The letter must also inform complainants of their right to ask for a review of the investigation if they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage One and how to access this second stage.

#### **4.0 Stage Two: review under direction of Trustee Board**

- 4.1 The process to be followed in reviewing the complaint is similar to Stage One but now the lead person conducting the review will be the Chair of the Trustee Board or a designated Trustee. The same target timetable applies.
- 4.2 Stage Two referrals may mean that the initial investigation has not addressed the pivotal point of the complaint. The Chair of the Trustee Board must be sure that the review takes this into account and should ensure that the root of the problem has been addressed. Users who reject the CEO's reply and seek a further response should be asked to explain their points of disagreement to facilitate a comprehensive assessment.
- 4.3 Once again, the response to the complainant must contain an explanation, apology if required, information about remedial actions, and satisfactory assurances that the complaint has been investigated fully.
- 4.4 The letter must also inform the complainant that the reviewer's decision is final.

#### **5.0 Role Of National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)**

- 5.1 NAVCA wishes to ensure that all CVS operate as effectively as possible to the benefit of local communities.
- 5.2 If, as a result of a complaint made to a CVS, any of the parties involved think it would be helpful to consult with the national association then they can do so. However, the role of NAVCA in such cases will be to facilitate a satisfactory conclusion to the complaint rather than to conduct a formal investigation.