

## 1 RECEIVING A COMPLAINT

- 1.1. All staff members and volunteers may receive complaints and feedback, expressed in writing, verbally or online. Complaints may also be received by [info@risenortheast.co.uk](mailto:info@risenortheast.co.uk), or by writing to the Charity's offices:

Royal Quays Business Centre  
Coble Dene  
North Shields

NE29 6DE

- 1.2. Where complaints are of a very serious nature, for example allegations of professional misconduct, or involving alleged harm, complainants should be encouraged to put their complaints in writing. This is not however a requirement and must not be used to discourage people from pursuing a complaint.
- 1.3. At any stage of the complaints process, those dealing with it may become aware that the criteria for reporting a serious incident have been met. A serious incident is any incident which presents a significant risk to the Charity's beneficiaries (i.e. children or young people or any other service users), property, work, or reputation, or that either has resulted in, or could result in, a significant loss of funds to the Charity. Serious incidents must be reported to the Charity Commission in a timely and appropriate way using the separate procedure for this purpose (the 'Procedure for Reporting Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission or Other Regulators').
- 1.4. In the event of a Serious Complaint or if, at any stage of the process, a complainant makes reference to taking legal action, the Chief Executive Officer must be consulted before any further action is taken under this Complaints Procedure.

## 2 STAGE 1 - LOCAL RESOLUTION

- 2.1 Generally, the purpose of this Complaints Procedure is to resolve disputes informally without resorting to formal investigation or legal proceedings. Managers dealing with complaints must always explore every option to resolve complaints by working with the complainant to agree an outcome which is satisfactory to them and to the Charity. Although the Responsible Manager may obtain information and speak to people involved, a clear distinction must always be maintained between this stage of the process and formal investigation which is part of Stage 2.
- 2.2 On receiving a complaint, the recipient will pass the matter to the Responsible Manager within 1 working day. The Responsible Manager or, in their absence, a nominated deputy will acknowledge each complaint within a maximum of 2 working days and send a copy of the appropriate complaints information to the complainant.
- 2.3 The Responsible Manager shall consider whether the complaint should be escalated to Stage 2 (Formal Investigation) immediately where the severity of the complaint

warrants this. In such cases, the Responsible Manager will refer the complaint to the Second Responsible Manager who will make the decision.

- 2.4 It is good practice, at Stage 1 of a complaint, for a representative of the Charity to offer to meet face to face with the complainant wherever practicable. This will not usually be possible where the complaint arises within a service delivered online or by telephone.
- 2.5 The Charity will make every effort to be sensitive to the complainant's background and individual circumstances, for example their gender, first language, and any disabilities they may have. The involvement of a friend or relative of the complainant may be helpful.
- 2.6 The Responsible Manager will try to resolve the complaint informally and in a timely way so that a response can be provided within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint. The response will include sending a written summary of the Responsible Manager's conclusions, and any action taken, to the complainant.

### **3 STAGE 2 – FORMAL INVESTIGATION**

- 3.1 Unless the complaint has been immediately referred to Stage 2, if the complainant remains dissatisfied after the Responsible Manager's response under Stage 1, then they should inform the Responsible Manager that the complaint has not been resolved.
- 3.2 Complainants should be encouraged to put their reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome at Stage 1 in writing but this is not a requirement. Similarly, complainants should register their dissatisfaction within 14 working days from receiving the outcome of the Stage 1 process in order that issues can be dealt with in a timely manner, but if this timescale is exceeded it will not exclude the pursuance of the complaint.
- 3.3 The Responsible Manager will escalate the complaint within 2 working days of becoming aware of the complainant's dissatisfaction to the Second Responsible Manager, or in their absence, to a nominated deputy, who will decide whether a formal investigation will be undertaken. The decision as to whether a formal investigation will take place will be communicated to the complainant within a further 2 working days.
- 3.4 The Second Responsible Manager will complete a formal investigation within 20 working days of the decision to proceed to Stage 2. If, in exceptional circumstances, this timescale cannot be met, the Second Responsible Manager will provide an update to the complainant and agree a revised timescale. The Second Responsible Manager should make all reasonable efforts to meet with the complainant unless this has already taken place at Stage 1 and a further meeting is considered unnecessary.
- 3.5 An Independent Person may be involved at Stage 2 where the complaint involves a child. The primary role of the Independent Person is to verify that the Charity's complaints procedure has been correctly followed and that the process has been fair and impartial. This role is different to that of the Second Responsible Manager and this

distinction should be maintained at all times. The Independent Person may also be engaged to provide other professional / technical advice to better understand the issues raised.

- 3.6 The outcome of the formal investigation will be communicated to the complainant within 5 working days of the conclusion of the investigation.

#### **4 STAGE 3 – INTERNAL APPEAL**

- 4.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 2, then they should communicate that dissatisfaction to the Second Responsible Manager within 14 days of the date the Stage 2 outcome has been communicated. If necessary, this timescale will be extended, and managers should not close down further consideration of the complaint on timescale grounds.
- 4.2 The complainant will be asked to provide reasons why they are not satisfied with the outcomes to Stages 1 and 2 of the Complaints Procedure in order to inform the internal appeal.
- 4.3 The Second Responsible Manager will escalate the complaint within 2 working days of receiving the internal appeal request, to the Chief Executive Officer, or a nominated deputy, who will conduct the internal appeal. Confirmation that the internal appeal is being undertaken will be communicated to the complainant within 5 working days of receiving the internal appeal request.
- 4.4 The Chief Executive Officer, or their nominated deputy, will review documentation relating to Stages 1 and 2 of the Complaints Procedure, including the way in which the complaint was handled. The review may also include a meeting with the complainant, or any staff member or volunteer involved, if this is considered necessary.
- 4.5 The Chief Executive Officer, or their nominated deputy, will either uphold the findings, decisions and actions taken or identify and offer to implement an alternative resolution(s) (which may include upholding the original complaint).
- 4.6 The outcome of the internal appeal must be communicated to the complainant within 20 working days of receiving the internal appeal request.

#### **5 WHAT HAPPENS AFTER STAGE 3 IF THE COMPLAINANT REMAINS DISSATISFIED?**

- 5.1 After the Charity's Complaints Procedure has been exhausted, complainants may refer their complaint to the Charity Commission. The link to the relevant website is below:  
<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

#### **6 DESCRIPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS**

- 6.1 Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction about the Charity, including the standards of service provided, which an individual(s) and/or an organisation(s) claims

to have affected them. This excludes complaints by the Charity's employees and volunteers delivering a Charity service, for which there are separate procedures.

- 6.2 Independent Person means a person with qualifications and/or experience relevant to the complaint, who is neither a former or current trustee, director or officer of the Charity, nor a former or current employee, agency worker or volunteer of the Charity. An independent person must not be someone who has directly or indirectly received the Charity's services, or a provider of services to the Charity (e.g. contractors/consultants). A spouse or partner or family member of any person listed above cannot act as an independent person.
- 6.3 Responsible Manager means the Charity employee responsible for the day-to-day management of the service area to which the complaint relates.
- 6.4 Serious Complaint means a complaint of a serious nature, for example allegations of professional misconduct or involving alleged harm, or a complaint which meets the criteria for reporting a serious incident as set out in the Charity's "Procedure for Reporting Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission or other Regulators".
- 6.5 Second Responsible Manager means the Responsible Manager's line manager.

### 7 SUMMARY – A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

#### STAGE 1 - LOCAL RESOLUTION

- Written / verbal / online complaint received and passed to Responsible Manager within 1 working day.
- Responsible Manager, or in their absence a nominated deputy, acknowledges complaint and acknowledges receipt within a maximum of 2 working days.
- Responsible Manager provides a response to the complainant aiming to resolve the complaint informally within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint (including a written summary of the conclusions and actions).

#### STAGE 2 - FORMAL INVESTIGATION

- Complainant tells the Charity that they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.
- Complaint escalated within 2 working days to Second Responsible Manager, or in their absence a nominated deputy, who decides whether a formal investigation will be undertaken and communicates this decision within a further 2 working days.
- Formal investigation undertaken and concluded within 20 working days of decision to proceed. Outcome communicated within 5 working days of conclusion of formal investigation.

#### STAGE 3 – INTERNAL APPEAL

- Complainant tells the Charity that they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.
- Second Responsible Manager escalates within 2 working days to the Chief Executive Officer or nominated deputy, who conducts an internal appeal. Confirmation that the appeal is being undertaken communicated to the complainant within 5 working days of receiving the appeal request.
- Chief Executive Officer or nominated deputy reviews Stages 1 and 2; either upholds the findings and decisions or identifies an alternative resolution(s).
- Outcome is communicated to complainant within 20 working days of receiving the appeal request.