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**Complaints Policy and Procedure**

**Statement**

**STEP aims to provide its staff, volunteers, service users and all other stakeholders with the best possible service. We positively welcome suggestions at any time, by anyone, for how we as an organisation can improve our service.**

**Our Trustees define a complaint as:**

*‘An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by STEP, or their staff, affecting an individual stakeholder or group of stakeholders’.*

Usually, a conversation with the person at the point of service delivery will suffice should a problem arise. However, we recognise that from time to time there may be occasions when users of our services and all other stakeholders feel that the quality or level of service provided fall short of what they could reasonably expect. We want to know about these occasions so that we can make good the problem and plan to avoid their repetition. If you have a complaint, we would like you to tell us about it.

**This is what you should do:**

If you have a complaint to make, it should be made to the Project Director\* who will try to resolve the issue informally. The Project Director will keep a log of all complaints received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two working days.

If the issue is serious, or you are not satisfied after raising it with the Project Director\*, you should make a formal complaint.

Your complaint should be made in writing; a form template is attached to this policy as guidance. The complaint should be marked “Private & Confidential” and sent to the Project Director\* who will acknowledge it in writing (normally within 7 days of receipt). *Remember to keep a copy of your letter. You can use an advocate to help you make your complaint if you would like to.*

The Project Director\* shall – in consultation with the Board of Trustees – investigate the complaint. *(See separate check list attached).*

The Project Director\* shall communicate the results of the investigation to you within a reasonable time - normally 21 days.

You have the right - if dissatisfied with the results of the inquiry – to put your case in writing or personally to a panel comprising at least three members from the STEP Trustee Board; at least one of which will not have been involved in the initial investigation.

If attending personally, you have the right to be accompanied by a friend or advocate.

The decision of the Trustees will be final.

Where appropriate, STEP will make a written apology to the complainant, and agree any further action necessary to make good the cause of the complaint.

All formal complaints and the response made to them will be recorded and filed in a secure place.

The Trustees shall be informed by the Project Director\* at the first available meeting of the number and nature of any formal complaints and their outcome, and consideration will be given to the implications these have for the planning and management of future services.

STEP’s complaints procedure will be publicised to organisations and individuals who use its services.

\*If a complaint relates to the Project Director, this should read Chair of Trustees instead throughout this policy.

Policy reviewed: October 2023 by Johanna Bryant

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Bob Barrett

(Chair of Trustees)

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| **STEP – Complaints Form** |
| Please refer to the Complaints Policy and Procedure for information should you feel you have a complaint to make against STEP. If this is unavailable or you have some questions about it, please speak with a member of staff.  You do not *need* to have read the policy and procedure to make a complaint. However, it gives advice about what happens to your complaint and how quickly you will receive a response and from whom.  If you need any help to complete this form, please speak with a member of staff or ask someone you trust to be an advocate for you.  **Person completing form must fill in all sections below.** |
| **Name of person completing form:** |
| **Name of person with complaint:** |
| **Today’s date:** |
| **What is the best way to respond to this complaint? Writing / in person / meeting with advocate / other:** |
| **Where should we send a written response to the comments?** |
| **Details of Complaint:** |
| **Date of incident (if relevant):** |
| **Name(s) of worker(s) involved (if known):** |
| **What action or lack of action made you unhappy about the service you received from STEP?** |
| **Please write as much information as possible. Use extra sheet(s) of paper if you need to and make sure they are stapled or paper-clipped together so they don’t get lost.** |

**Complaints Checklist**

Use this checklist when first investigating a complaint as part of STEP (Swindon)’s Complaints Policy and Procedure.

**Please ensure all documents and evidence relating to the complaint are kept together in a secure place.**

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| --- | --- |
| Have you conveyed verbally to the complainant the investigation procedure and timescale? | YES/NO |
| Have you conducted an interview to establish background to, and detail of, the complaint? | YES/NO |
| Have you written a statement about the complaint which you have dated and signed? | YES/NO |
| Has the complainant countersigned as correct the statement you have taken? | YES/NO |
| Have you given a copy of the complaint to those associated with its contents? | YES/NO |
| Have you asked, in writing, for a statement from those associated with the complaint within an agreed period of time? | YES/NO |
| Have you received the statements within the agreed time period? | YES/NO |
| Have you advised those being interviewed that they can have a union representative or friend with them? | YES/NO |
| Have you interviewed all those associated with the complaint? | YES/NO |
| Have you written up, signed, and dated your notes from each of these interviews? | YES/NO |
| Have you reviewed all the evidence placed before you? | YES/NO |
| Have you assessed whether or not you feel there are grounds for complaint? | YES/NO |
| If so, have you considered all the options for action that could/should be taken as a result? | YES/NO |
| Are you clear in your own mind what will be the content of the discussion with the Trustees about this investigation and its findings? | YES/NO |
| Have you discussed fully with the Chair and Trustees the findings of your investigation and your recommendations for action? | YES/NO |
| Have you put these formally in writing to the Chair and Trustees, together with the statements and notes taken during the course of the investigation? | YES/NO |