

Complaints Policy and Procedures

In the course of our work befriending and supporting people seeking asylum and refugees, SWVG aims for the highest standards. We seek to provide a place of belonging and growth for our members, including volunteers and those accessing our services. SWVG is committed to developing and maintaining a culture of safeguarding.

Policy Statement:

We aim to provide the highest standard of service. If we fail to do that, or if you have concerns, we want you to tell us. If you feel that your concern has not been dealt with adequately, you may want to make a complaint. SWVG will ensure that the appropriate action is taken by following this process and provide all the possible support you may require. This will enable us not only to deal with the specific problem, but also to learn from it and to prevent it happening again.

This policy sets out how to make a complaint and what to do if you are not satisfied with the way your complaint has been dealt with.

SWVG assures you that:

- Your complaint will be taken seriously
- It will be dealt with confidentially
- It will be dealt with fairly and promptly
- An interpreter will be made available if necessary
- You are entitled to be accompanied by a supporter of your choice.

Complaints Procedure:

You can make a complaint in writing, by telephone, or in person, to a member of the Complaints Committee (see below page - 3).

The people directly involved may be told about your complaint. If you are worried about this, you should say so when you make your complaint. However, if it becomes necessary to let that person know that a complaint has been made, we will contact you to discuss this in strict confidence before any investigation begins.

The Complaints Committee will acknowledge your complaint promptly, investigate it appropriately, and attempt to resolve it within the designated timescales. The Complaints Committee will let you know their conclusion after they have reviewed your complaint.

If there is a complaint against a Complaints Committee member, the same procedure will be followed, but at all stages a Trustee will act as a substitute for the member of the Complaints Committee.

If you are unhappy about the way in which your complaint has been dealt with, please contact the Chair of Trustees or another Trustee.

Preliminary Stage:

Complaints can be received in writing or verbally either by telephone or in person through a complaint request.

Stage 1: Local Resolution:

The complainant should be invited to discuss the complaint with the Complaints Committee. This can be done in person or by phone or via online whichever is appropriate. Complaints Committee will endeavour to resolve the matter in an appropriate manner.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, or where it is not possible to use Stage 1 above (for example if it is not possible for them to communicate over the phone or meet online or visit the office or for any other reason) then refer to Stage 2 below.

Stage 1 should be completed within 7 working days of receiving the complaint.

Stage 2

The complainant should be asked to submit the complaint in writing to the Complaints Committee and provide as much detail as possible regarding the complaint. The complainant can write the complaint in any language they prefer. We will translate if necessary and a copy will be sent to the complainant.

If the complainant is unable to submit their complaint in writing, the Complaints Committee will conduct an interview with the complainant or his / her nominee or supporter. The role of the Complaints Committee and nominee or supporter at this meeting will be confined to putting the complaints in writing, obtaining the complainant's approval for the contents of this and asking the complainant to sign to indicate their agreement with the contents.

At this stage and throughout the process the complainant may choose a third party as his/her nominee or supporter. If the complainant does not have a resource they can turn to, we will provide a list of potential advocates such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and other similar organisations.

The Complaints Committee will then investigate the complaint, resolve the issue appropriately and respond in writing to the complainant.

This written response will summarise what investigations have been carried out and what action, if any, has been proposed to resolve the problem. If there has been any fault on the part of SWVG, a full apology will be given and the complainant will be informed of the steps that we will take to rectify matters. If there are learning points for us, these should be included in this response.

If a response by letter is unsuitable for any reason, the Complaints Committee should be arranged a meeting with the complainant and provided the response verbally. A written record of this meeting will be recorded and signed by the complainant.

Stage 2 should be completed within 15 working days of receiving the complaint letter.

If the complainant is not satisfied with this stage, they should ask for the matter to be dealt with under Stage 3 below.

Stage 3: Appeal

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response provided, they may make an appeal in writing. They will have **10 working** days to appeal. This appeal should be made to the board of Trustees.

A record of the complaint and response given will be provided to the Board of Trustees and any additional information provided by either party may be considered. In all cases the decision or response will be based on all the evidence collected. The Board of Trustees will comprise one member of the Complaints Committee. Wherever possible the Trustees and the Complaints Committee members will be persons who have no prior connection with the relevant complaint.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for trustees to conduct an independent investigation. Under these circumstances the timescales for investigation and review will be defined by the Trustees board.

The complainant will be notified by letter that the appeal has been received and that the case is being processed, outlining the time frame for the appeal hearing and response.

The decision of this appeal will be given in writing to the complainant within 28 working days but subject to the above circumstances. The decision taken at this stage will be final.

Complaints Committee:

Katie Gearing

Khalid Omer

David Robertson

Patrick Stevenson

William Brook-Hart

Co-Chairs of Trustees:

Hazel Inskip

Catherine Hartley

Recording and Monitoring Complaints:

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

The Complaints Committee shall submit a report quarterly to the Trustees meeting on the complaints received, how they have been resolved, what action has been taken, and the future plan.

Ensuring the effectiveness of the Policy:

All members and volunteers will be advised of the complaints policy during the initial training. The policy will be reviewed periodically and any changes will be published.

Monitoring & Review:

This policy will be reviewed by the board of Trustees, who will ensure that it is implemented and followed with utmost care, and will be open to any concerns or feedback.