



POLICY & PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

1. PURPOSE OF THE COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Independent Advocacy Perth and Kinross (IAPK) views complaints in a positive way and will respond to a complaint in a courteous and timely way. Each complaint will be taken seriously and investigated to the appropriate level. The complainant will be kept informed of the process and offered clarification and explanations as necessary as will the person being complained about.

The complaints procedure is open to anyone who is, or has, had contact with IAPK in any capacity. The exception to this is that of current staff members who should access the Grievance Procedure.

One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our organisation is by listening and responding to the views of others, and in particular, by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

Therefore, we aim to ensure that:

- ◆ making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- ◆ we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our organisation which calls for an immediate response;
- ◆ we deal with complaints and concerns promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- ◆ we respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc.
- ◆ we learn from complaints and concerns and use them to improve our resource, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

We recognise that most concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly. An informal approach is appropriate when this can be achieved. However, if concerns cannot be resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

2. DEFINITION OF COMPLAINT

A complaint within the context of the Complaints Procedure means an expressed dissatisfaction with the advocacy organisation and a wish to have that dissatisfaction recorded and addressed, to enable the removal of the dissatisfaction.

3. STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All within IAPK will respond positively and helpfully to anyone who may be expressing a concern or complaint. This is part of IAPK's commitment to good practice.

Staff, volunteers, advocacy partners and others are informed that there is a complaints procedure and assurance that the use of the procedure will not lead to victimisation or discrimination by the organisation.

The Chief Executive, or in the event of the Chief Executive being the subject of the complaint the Board of Directors, is responsible for ensuring the smooth operation of the complaints procedure; including any clarification of points that are unclear to the complainant.

4. GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Where a complaint against a member of staff is upheld, this may result in disciplinary action. Disciplinary action is independent of the complaints procedure. (Please see IAPK Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures)

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

STEP ONE

A complaint can be made to IAPK in a way that is accessible by the complainant.

- A verbal account which will need to be transcribed onto IAPK's complaint form and verified by the complainant
- Letter
- Email
- Digital Technology

Complainants can be supported, if required, by their advocate, to formulate and express the complaint (except where the complaint is about their advocacy support when another advocate can provide support).

STAFF CAN NOT REFUSE TO ACCEPT A COMPLAINT

The complaint should be submitted to Independent Advocacy Perth and Kinross.

- A. Every effort should be made to resolve the complaint informally in the first instance.
- B. On receipt of the complaint, the Chief Executive shall give written acknowledgment within 7 days.
- C. The Chief Executive will use the IAPK 'Complaint Record' to log the complaint and each stage of the complaints process.

- D. The Chief Executive will consider an appropriate response to the complaint and try to resolve the problem, by negotiation and/or conciliation. A response should be given to the complainant without delay and certainly within 28 days.
- E. The response and outcome to the complaint shall be recorded on the IAPK 'Complaint Record'.
- F. If the complaint is about the Chief Executive, the Chair will respond in accordance with Step Two (see below).

In all cases, a written response must be sent to complainants together with further procedural steps to be taken, if the response is not satisfactory to the complainant.

If the outcome is satisfactory, no further action is required in relation to the complainant.

STEP TWO

In the event that:

The complainant is still not satisfied, wants to appeal or wishes to go straight to this stage the following procedure shall apply:-

- A. The Chief Executive will acknowledge receipt from the complainant by letter with a copy to the Chair.
- B. The Chair will select two members of the Board of Directors to investigate the complaint independently of the Chief Executive.
- C. A written report of the appeal shall be made and recorded with the written complaint, with a copy to the Chief Executive.
- D. The Chair will respond in writing to the Complainant as to the outcome of the investigation
- E. If this is satisfactory no further action may be taken in relation to the Complainant

STEP TWO SHOULD BE CONCLUDED WITHIN A TIMESCALE OF 28 DAYS

STEP THREE

If the Complainant is still dissatisfied with the response, as a result of the appeal the following procedures shall apply:

- A. The ongoing dissatisfaction of the Complainant should be submitted in writing.
- B. A Special Meeting of the Board of Directors shall be called. Each member shall receive a file of all the documentation relating to the complaint. The Chair, Chief Executive and those engaged in the investigation shall attend to report and submit information, but in the interests of good practice, shall leave before any decision is taken. Therefore, a Director not involved in the initial investigation should chair the meeting.
- C. The Chair of the Special Meeting shall draw up a written response to be recorded and sent to the Complainant.

The Special Meeting shall take place within 28 days of the implementation of Step 3 and the response to the Complainant to be sent within 7 days of the meeting.

This concludes the Complaint Procedure.

If the Complainant remains dissatisfied they should be informed by the Chief Executive of their right to contact an Independent Arbiter, and this will be discussed at that time and an agreeable next step confirmed.