

SAFE STRONG AND FREE PROJECT

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Reviewed: 6th July 2016
Due for Review: July 2017

Introduction

The public who use the Safe Strong and Free Project have the right to:

- ❑ a high quality of service
- ❑ have their views about the Project taken into account by Ssf staff
- ❑ question the judgements and decisions of Ssf Directors
- ❑ know that corrective action has been taken if the service they receive is not of an adequate standard

It is probable that the work of any employee in regular contact with members of the public will be subject to adverse criticism or outright complaint.

It is also the case that those, whose work brings them into contact with the Project, may make a complaint.

To be criticised is always discouraging, and has the potential to be damaging both to the individual personally and to their quality of work.

Employees and volunteers have the right to:

- ❑ be supported when their work is of an acceptable standard
- ❑ guidance and training where it is not
- ❑ recognition they may have to make judgements which involve elements of uncertainty and risk
- ❑ support when they are required to take action which is unwelcome to some of those with whom they work.

Experience shows that:

- ❑ some but not all complaints are reasonable
- ❑ the majority of complaints reflect limitations of resources rather than poor standard of work by individuals;
- ❑ almost all complainants are seeking a positive solution i.e. their primary concern is to secure action in relation to the issues which concern them, not to secure the censure of those who have provided the service.

General Principles

The following general principles will guide the handling of all complaints made about the work of members of the Safe Strong and Free Project.

- ❑ It is important to ensure that complaints are handled in a manner which recognises, in a balanced way, the rights and well-being of both the service user and the service provider, distinguishes poor quality of work from the effects of limited resources and encourages positive working relationships and positive outcomes.
- ❑ Users of the Safe Strong and Free Project have the right to complain, to have any complaint treated seriously, to receive a response to their complaint, and to know that any action which is appropriate has been taken.
- ❑ Staff members and volunteers of the Safe, Strong and Free Project have the right to have their work judged in relation to realistic expectations, and to appropriate support.
- ❑ Where a complaint is received by the Chairperson the desirability and feasibility of directing the complainant in the first instance to the employee or volunteer involved will always be explored with the complainant.

- ❑ All complaints about the Project, conduct of employees and volunteers will be made directly to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors or their named representative.
- ❑ All users will be made aware of their right to complain about the service, conduct of employees and volunteers and who to address the complaint to on all workshop feedback forms.
- ❑ It is considered good practice to keep a log of complaints. This is intended to provide basic information covering the nature of complaints received and the time taken to respond. This log will cover only written complaints and serious verbal complaints that require a formal response.

Complaints Procedure

For complaints relating to the quality of service or to how a member of staff or volunteer has behaved, a detailed response is often required.

Where a complaint is received in relation to the service given it will be handled as follows:

- ❑ The right of the complainant to complain will be explicitly recognised (unless repeated and clearly unjustified complaints are being made).
- ❑ Unless there are legal constraints, the member/s of staff or volunteer/s involved in giving the service complained of will be informed.
- ❑ The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 14 working days.
- ❑ When a complaint is made it can neither be assumed that it is justified or unjustified.
- ❑ Complainants have the right to have their complaint investigated, and to receive feedback regarding whether the complaint is thought to be justified, and what action (if any) is proposed in response to the complaint.
- ❑ Unless there are legal constraints, the written response to a complaint will always be prepared in discussion with those who are directly involved in the work complained of.
- ❑ Responses to complaints will acknowledge instances where the complaint is justified but will also clearly distinguish fact and judgement.

Afterward

It is also important to recognise that complaints can offer important feedback to individuals about the way that they are doing the job, and that although being complained about is always uncomfortable, it has the potential to stimulate and inform personal and professional growth and learning.