



COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

1. Policy

- 1.1 Reach4Reality aims to provide high quality, accessible services to its young people, staff, volunteers and others who seek its help and support.
- 1.2 Reach4Reality aims to build a culture where complaints are valued.
- 1.3 As part of this commitment we have established a complaints handling procedure the aim of which is to enable individuals and organisations using our services to make complaints and be responded to in line with the principles of best practice.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The principles underlying our complaints handling procedure are as follows:
 - i) **User-focused**, putting the complainant at the heart of the process.
 - ii) **Accessible**, appropriately communicated, easily understood and available to all.
 - iii) **Simple and timely**, with as few steps as necessary and with an agreed and transparent timeframe.
 - iv) **Thorough, proportionate and consistent**, providing quality outcomes in all complaints through robust but proportionate investigation and the use of clear quality standards.
 - v) **Objective, impartial and fair**, evidence-based, driven by facts and established circumstances, and clearly demonstrated.
 - vi) **Seeks early resolution**, aiming to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity, to the service-user's satisfaction wherever possible and appropriate.
 - vii) **Delivers improvement**, through analysing outcomes to support service delivery and drive service quality improvements.

- 2.2 An explanation of these principles can be found in Appendix 1

3. Definition of a complaint

- 3.1 A complaint is:
“**an expression of dissatisfaction** by a person receiving care or support from Reach4Reality, by their carer or by one or more members of the public about the care and/or support that an individual or individuals receive from Reach4Reality”
- 3.2 A complaint may relate to:
 - inadequate standards of care

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- our failure to uphold the rights of a person using a service, or their relatives or carers
- our failure to follow appropriate safe care practices
- the practice of staff and volunteers, including treatment by, or conduct of, a member of staff/volunteers, fitness of staff/volunteers, inadequate staff/volunteer training and staff/volunteer numbers or deployment.

3.3 The following would not be considered as a complaint:

- An initial request for a service
- Asking for an explanation of a policy
- An appeal against a decision

3.4 We will continue to seek and monitor suggestions, comments or feedback from service-users and carers in line with our Internal Monitoring and Quality Assurance policies

4. Procedure

4.1 Stages of a complaint:

There are three stages to our complaints handling procedure:

1. Frontline Resolution
2. Investigation
3. Independent External Review

4.2 At any stage the complainant (a young person or parent) can contact or make a complaint direct to the Care Inspectorate at any time TEL 03456009527 or <http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/complaints> or write to their local office: Care Inspectorate, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, INVERNESS, IV3 8NW

4.3 At any stage the complainant can be supported by a representative (e.g. carer, Social Worker, advocate).

5. Frontline Resolution:

5.1 Reach4Reality will take every opportunity to resolve complaints at the first point of contact through frontline resolution.

5.2 This is for issues that are straightforward and easily resolved requiring little or no investigation, (i.e. non-complex/non-contentious), for example:

- Where a service that should have been provided has not been provided
- A service has not been provided to an appropriate standard
- A request for a service has not been answered/actioned
- A complaint that a staff member/volunteer was rude or unhelpful
- A staff member failed to attend a scheduled appointment

5.3 These complaints may be received via letter, email, over the telephone or in person, but should all be recorded on our complaints form (see Appendix 2).

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- 5.4 They may be addressed by any member of staff or referred to the Project Coordinator for frontline resolution. A volunteer receiving a complaint should refer it to an appropriate member of staff to address.
- 5.5 The person receiving the complaint should consider 4 key questions:
- i. What is the complaint?
 - ii. What does the complainant wish to achieve by complaining?
 - iii. Can I achieve this, or provide an explanation as to why not?
 - iv. If I can't resolve this, who is the appropriate member of staff to refer it to? In most cases this will be to the Camp leader, Project worker or Project Coordinator.
- 5.6 Wherever possible Reach4Reality will ensure that staff members who are the subject of a complaint should not handle or respond to the complaint – nor should staff who have a clear conflict of interest in the matter.
- 5.7 'On-the-spot' apology, explanation or other action will be taken to resolve the complaint quickly, ideally within 24 hours for the majority of cases, but all should be completed in 5 working days (or less), unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g. where appropriate enquiries are required to obtain information for the response to the complainant but not immediately possible due to illness or holiday of relevant staff). In these exceptional circumstances, Reach4Reality has the option of negotiating with the complainant an agreed extension of up to a further 5 working days. The reasons for the delay and the revised timescale for response will be provided to the complainant and recorded on the complaints form.
- 5.8 Complaint details, outcome and action taken should be recorded on the complaints form and used for service improvement.
- 5.9 Where a complaint has been successfully resolved at the frontline stage, the outcome should be communicated to the complainant either by face-to-face, telephone, email or written communication. A note of this should be recorded on the complaints form.
- 5.10 Where a complainant refuses to engage with attempts to achieve frontline resolution and insists that their complaint be fully investigated and a formal response provided, the complaint should be escalated to the investigation stage.
- 5.11 The Project Coordinator will oversee and monitor all aspects of frontline resolution and will report to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis.

6. Investigation

- 6.1 Examples of issues suitable for the investigation stage include;

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- Where frontline resolution was attempted, but the complainant remains dissatisfied
 - The complainant refuses to engage with the frontline resolution process
 - The issues raised are complex and will require detailed investigation to establish the facts
 - The complaint relates to issues that have been identified as serious or high risk/high profile
- 6.2 Potential serious or high risk/high profile complaints might involve:
- A death or serious injury
 - Child protection issues
 - Repeated failure on the part of a staff member to provide a service
 - Serious or repeated failure to provide adequate standards of care
 - Serious or repeated inappropriate behaviour or misconduct by staff or volunteers
 - Cases where there has been press interest or a risk to Reach4Reality has been identified
- 6.3 Where possible complaints at this stage should be submitted in writing. If this presents a barrier to the complainant, they should be supported (by volunteers/staff/carer or independent advocate) to submit their complaint in the most appropriate method for them. If someone else writes the complaint for them, this person should read the complaint back to them to ensure that an accurate record has been taken. Where possible, the complainant should endorse the complaint form or letter to show that they agree that this is the complaint they want to make.
- 6.4 It is the responsibility of the Project Coordinator to investigate and respond to complaints at the investigation stage, with support from the Board of Trustees as required or appropriate.
- 6.5 If the complaint is against the Project Coordinator, the Chair of the Board will take on this responsibility.
- 6.6 If the complaint is against a member of the Board of Trustees, the Project Coordinator will liaise closely with the Chair of the Board or other Trustee as appropriate.
- 6.7 If the complaint is against the Board as a whole, the complaint will be investigated by an appropriate independent/external person.
- 6.8 Those dealing with complaints at this stage should have sufficient/appropriate training and support to be able to carry out the investigation effectively.
- 6.9 Complaints at this stage should be acknowledged within 3 working days.
- 6.10 On receiving a complaint, the complaint handler should address 3 key questions:
- i. What is the complaint?

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- ii. What does the complainant wish to achieve by complaining?
- ii. Are the complainant's expectations realistic and achievable?

The answers to these should be established and agreed by the complainant and complaint handler at the outset.

- 6.11 The complaint handler will carry out a tailored investigation to establish the facts behind the complaint, including a history of the circumstances or events leading up to the complaint. This might involve gathering information from the complainant, staff members, volunteers, other young people, carers or third parties as appropriate.
- 6.12 The complaint handler should seek to establish:
- i. What should have happened?
 - ii. What did happen?
 - iii. What was the cause of any identified failings?
 - iv. What can be done to rectify failings?
- The conclusion reached must be based on an objective analysis of the evidence and should provide a clear explanation of this analysis. All points raised by the complainant should be properly and fully considered in Reach4Reality's response.
- 6.13 The complaint handler should aim to resolve the complaint by either meeting the complainant's expectations or, where this is not appropriate, providing a full explanation of Reach4Reality's position
- 6.14 A full response - outlining Reach4Reality's decision regarding the outcome and actions to be taken - should be provided to the complainant within 20 working days. This should be ideally done face-to-face, and followed up by a written letter. This letter should also tell the complainant about their right to complain to the Care Inspectorate (if they have not already done so) or the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO), if they are not happy with Reach4Reality's final decision.
- 6.15 If the response will be delayed, the complainant will be told and given a revised timescale for bringing the investigation to a conclusion.
- 6.16 All communications as part of the investigation will be recorded on the additional pages of the complaints form.
- 6.17 The Project Coordinator will keep the Board of Trustees informed of complaints (and outcomes of complaints) at the investigation stage.
- 6.18 Where appropriate (e.g. if the complaint is not easily resolved through written correspondence), mediation or conciliation can be used to facilitate communication.

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7. Independent External Review

- 7.1 If the complainant is dissatisfied with Reach4Reality's investigation and final response, they can make a complaint to the Care Inspectorate (CI) or the SPSO and contact details of these will be given in the final letter.
- 7.2 Reach4Reality will ensure that its' records of investigations will be made available for review by the CI or SPSO.

8. Unacceptable behaviour by complainants

- 8.1 Reach4Reality recognises that the circumstances leading up to the complaint and making the complaint can be stressful; also that this might lead to the complainant acting in an unacceptable way. Examples of behaviour that might be considered unacceptable include: persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint; persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what can or cannot be done about the complaint, and continuing to pursue a complaint without any new information – especially when accompanied by angry, aggressive, offensive or demanding behaviour towards staff.
- 8.2 In the unlikely event of this occurring, the complainant will be told what the unacceptable behaviour is and what problem it is causing. If the behaviour is adversely affecting staff's ability to do their work and provide a service to others, then the contact with the complainant may be restricted to written or third party correspondence, preventing them from directly contacting staff with repeated telephone calls or emails.
- 8.3 The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards staff may result in the ending of all direct contact with the service-user. It may be appropriate to report incidents to the police.
- 8.4 Reach4Reality will develop an Unacceptable Actions policy which will outline more fully Reach4Reality's policy and procedure for dealing with instances of unacceptable behaviour. This will be communicated to all staff handling complaints and be available to complainants in an accessible format

9. Redress

- 9.1 Reach4Reality will consider the complainants' wishes regarding redress, and if it is reasonable, make the desired arrangements.
- 9.2 Appropriate redress could include:
- An apology
 - An explanation
 - Correcting the error
 - Financial redress

10. Access

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10.1 Reach4Reality will aim to maximise accessibility to its' Complaints Handling Policy through the following means:

- Full policy and complaints form available through a link on the home page of Reach4Reality's website
- A summary of the full policy and a complaints form to be included in Reach4Reality's Parents Guide to R4R, with a link to the full policy
- A summary of the full policy and the complaints form to be available in an easy view leaflet and given to parents and young people; to be accessible to young people on a camp
- A poster to be displayed on camps identifying what a young person should do if they want to make a complaint
- All online and paper documents will include: contact details of who to make the complaint to, how to make a complaint, timescales, contact details of local advocacy support and the Care Inspectorate

11. Recording and monitoring

11.1 Reach4Reality will record all complaints on its' complaints form (See Appendix 2 & 3).

11.2 All documentation concerning complaints will be kept in a complaints file in a locked filing cabinet in the Reach4Reality office.

11.3 The Project Coordinator will monitor complaint records to identify trends and to proactively improve the efficiency of the service provided, as well as for reporting to the Board of Trustees.

11.4 Reach4Reality will make complaint outcomes publicly available via it's website.

12. Learning and Improvement

12.1 The Project Coordinator with the Board of Trustees will review this complaints information on a regular basis and consider whether there is potential to improve Reach4Reality's service or update internal policies or procedures.

13. Staff Training

13.1 Reach4Reality will aim to provide staff with the appropriate skills, resources and training to enable them to carry out their roles as complaints handlers either at the Frontline resolution or Investigation stages.

These are based on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) Principles of Complaints Handling.

- i) **User-focused**, putting the complainant at the heart of the process:
 - We recognise the different needs of individuals and aim to be flexible and responsive to those needs where possible and appropriate
 - Complainants will be listened to, respected and treated with dignity
 - Complainants should feel supported in bringing a complaint
 - Confidentiality will be observed where appropriate
- ii) **Accessible**, appropriately communicated, easily understood and available to all:
 - Complaints should be welcomed by informed and empowered staff
 - The complaints procedure will be well publicised
 - The complaints procedure will be easily understood
 - Support will be given to help service-users and their carers to access and use the procedure
- iii) **Simple and timely**, with as few steps as necessary and with an agreed and transparent timeframe:
 - The process of dealing with complaints will be timely with timescales which are clear, published and adhered to
 - Thoroughness of investigation will not be compromised by attempts to meet timescales, and flexibility may be afforded for particularly complex cases
 - In cases where timescales cannot be met for good reason, complainants are kept informed of those reasons
- iv) **Thorough, proportionate and consistent**, providing quality outcomes in all complaints through robust but proportionate investigation and the use of clear quality standards:
 - There will be detailed quality standards for complaints handling, that are well publicised to service-users and staff, along with a clear explanation of what action will be taken if these standards are not met
 - The complaints handling procedure and quality standards will be regularly reviewed (annually or more frequent if required)
 - The method of investigating and resolving the complaint should be proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances of the case
 - Investigations, outcomes and redress should be consistent from one complaint to another whilst being flexible in considering the needs of the individual complainant
 - Conclusions should be based on the facts and circumstances established and this should be clearly demonstrated
- v) **Objective, impartial and fair**, evidence-based, driven by facts and established circumstances, and clearly demonstrated:

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- All relevant facts will be gathered and established in an impartial manner
- Staff involved in complaints handling should be impartial, independent and accountable – as far as possible they should not be involved in investigating where they have been the subject of the complaint or involved in hits handling
- Complaints handlers should act with respect towards service-users: a complainant should only be treated differently to other complainants if this is justified by the individual actions or behaviour of the complainant
- Fairness extends to complaints handling staff and the subject of any complaint

vi) **Seeks early resolution**, aiming to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity, to the service-user's satisfaction wherever possible and appropriate:

- Staff should be trained and empowered to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity, starting with the first point of contact with service-users
- The outcome the service-user wants should be clarified at the outset and, where possible and appropriate, satisfied

vii) **Delivers improvement**, through analysing outcomes to support service delivery and drive service quality improvements:

- The complaints handling procedure will reflect and enhance the culture of good service delivery
- Complaint outcomes will be publicly available and used to demonstrate improvement and share best practice
- Data from complaints should be used to measure performance, identify trends and highlight problems so they can be solved before they have a chance to escalate, with the overall purpose of contributing to the continuous improvement of our service delivery

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APPENDIX 2 Complaints form

Reach4Reality Complaint Form



Name of Complainant _____

Date and time of complaint _____

Section 1: Nature of complaint:

Please tell us briefly in the box below what your complaint is about and what has gone wrong :

Please continue on a separate sheet of paper if required.

Section 2:

From the information in section 1, please list the main points of complaint you want us to investigate:

1.

2.

3.

Section 3:

How have you suffered as a result of what has happened?

A large, empty red rectangular box intended for the respondent to describe how they have suffered as a result of the incident.

Section 4:

If we are able to take on your complaint, what would you want us to do for you?

A large, empty red rectangular box intended for the respondent to state what actions they would want the organization to take if the complaint is accepted.

Section 5:

Person making the complaint:

Please fill in this section with your details using CAPITAL LETTERS. If you are complaining for someone else you must fill in this section and section 6.

Your title: (Mr/Miss/Ms/Mrs/other)

Your first name:

Your surname:

Your address:

Your phone numbers:

Your email address:

What is your preferred method of contact?

Your signature:

Date:

Please tell us if you need information from us in another language or format by ticking the box below:

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- Braille
- Audio version
- Another language (give details): _____
- Large font
- Any other needs (give details): _____

**Section 6:
Complaining for someone else:**

If you are complaining for someone else, fill in this section with their details using CAPITAL LETTERS:

Their title: (Mr/Miss/Ms/Mrs/other)

Their first name:

Their surname:

Their address:

Their phone numbers:

What is your relationship to this person?

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We need the person affected by the complaint to sign the consent in section 7, if they can, to allow you to complain for them.

If they are unable to sign for any reason, please tell us why in the box below:

Section 7: Consent:

I authorise the person named in section 5 to make my complaint to Reach4Reality for me. I understand that Reach4Reality may give personal information about me and my complaint to this named person.

Signature:

Date:

Our service standards

We want to offer a high standard of service to everyone who uses our service. You have the right to complain if you feel we're not meeting our standards. You can contact us for more information about how to do this.

Our decisions

If you're unhappy with our decision, including a decision not to investigate, you have the right to complain to the Care Inspectorate. Their contact details can be found at the bottom of this form.

Your information

We are committed to protecting your privacy. We use information given to us about you and your complaint for its intended purpose and in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may need to collect and share information with a number of sources to carry out our investigation and we may do this orally, in hard copy or by email.

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We may also use information we collect to compile statistics and undertake research and analysis. There may be public interest benefits in reusing information for these purposes. Information is completely anonymised. Your views are valuable to us, and we may contact you again to invite you to take part in our surveys for research purposes.

To find out more about how we handle your information, please ask us. If you have any concerns about what we do, please let us know straight away

Please return or send your completed form to:

Reach4Reality
Hilton Light House
4 Tomatin Road
Inverness
IV2 4UA

Or email it to: info@reach4reality.org.uk

Or hand it in person to one of our staff or volunteers

Or place it in our Complaints box on a camp

An online version of our form is available on our website: <http://reach4reality.org.uk/>

To make a complaint direct to the Care Inspectorate at any time:

TEL 03456009527

Or <http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/complaints>

Or write to their local office: Care Inspectorate, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, INVERNESS, IV3 8NW

APPENDIX 3 Record of Complaints received



Name of person receiving the complaint: _____

Date Complaint received: _____

Method of complaint: _____

What is the complaint:

What does the complainant wish to achieve by complaining?

Can I achieve this, or provide an explanation as to why not?

If I can't resolve this, who is the appropriate member of staff to refer it to for Frontline Resolution?

N.B.

- If the complaint is complex/contentious/high risk then it is not suitable for Frontline Resolution and should be escalated to the Investigation stage
- In most cases the complaint should be resolved within 24 hours, and all within 5 working days.
- In exceptional circumstances this can be extended by a further 5 working days

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Outcome:

(E.g. On-the-spot apology or explanation given, referred to more appropriate member of staff, escalated to the Investigation stage....)

Action taken:

Date of action:

Date complainant notified of outcome:

Date forwarded to the Project Coordinator:

Date Social Worker notified (if appropriate):

APPENDIX 4 Record of Complaints: Investigation Stage

Date of escalation to Investigation stage:

Date complaint acknowledged (within 3 working days):

Reason for escalating to Investigation stage:

Name of person carrying out the investigation:

People contacted during the investigation:
(This could include: complainant, carer, staff members, volunteers, Outdoor Centre Staff, other young people, other relevant third parties)

Date	Person contacted	Summary of discussion

Continue on separate sheet if required

Conclusion:

- i. What should have happened?
- ii. What did happen?
- iii. What was the cause of any identified failings?
- iv. What can be done to rectify failings?

Outcome/decision:

Date complainant notified of Outcome:

Date Social Worker notified: