



Complaints Procedure

Last updated: May 2018

The procedure sets out the steps we will take when we receive a complaint from Welcoming participants, an organisation or member of the public. It does not address complaints made by staff and volunteers (dealt with through grievance and disciplinary procedures) or job applicants (recruitment procedure).

The Board of Directors exists to ensure that the Welcoming Association is accountable to its participants. Therefore, the Board of Directors undertakes to investigate all complaints and, if the complaint is upheld, redress will be made.

1. Making a complaint - General

When a participant wishes to complain about an aspect of service at the Welcoming, the following procedure should be adopted. Where the complaint is against the Co-Directors the same procedure will be followed, but with the Convenor of the Board of Directors substituting for the Co-Directors roles at all stages.

The complainant should be invited to put their complaint in writing using the Welcoming Complaints Form. If the complainant does not wish to, or is unable to put the complaint in writing, a verbal statement of complaint shall be accepted. It shall be the duty of the Co-Directors to ensure that details of any verbal complaints are noted and that the complainant agrees with the notes.

2. Making an Initial complaint - Stage 1

The complainant should be invited to speak to the Co-Directors to discuss the complaint with them. This can be done in person or by phone and the Co-Directors should keep a record of the conversation on the complaints monitoring sheet.

At this stage, all attempts should be made to resolve the complaint on the same day and in any event as soon as possible after the complaint is made. The outcome shall normally be given in writing and the level of redress should also be detailed where appropriate. The Co-Directors shall be available to explain the outcome verbally should a complainant wish. The complainant should be informed of the next stage of the complaints procedure should they remain dissatisfied.

Stage 1 should be completed within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.

3. Making a further complaint - Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their initial complaint, they should be invited to make a written complaint to the Board of Directors either by completing a complaints form (as above) or writing a letter. Where a complainant is unable to put the complaint in writing, the Co-ordinator should offer assistance by writing down the details of the complaint and the reasons for

wishing to progress to stage 2. The Co-Directors should read these details back to the complainant for agreement as to their accuracy. This complaint will then be referred to the Complaints Panel.

4. Complaints Panel

The Board will elect a complaints panel consisting of three Board members. It will be appointed each year at the Board of Directors meeting immediately following the AGM. The sub-committee's membership will, as far as practicable, achieve a balance in accordance with Welcoming Association's Equality and Diversity policy.

The panel will notify the complainant in writing that they are dealing with the matter. The panel will review the events in stage one and may seek further clarification from any of the parties involved. This may include interviewing the complainant if necessary.

The panel will notify the complainant of their decision and reasons for the decision within 15 days of having received the complaint – unless they notify the complainant of a reason for delay.

The panel's decision is final and the panel will report their findings and decision to the next meeting of the Board of Directors.

5. Redress

If the Co-Directors or Complaints panel find that the complaint is upheld, redress will be offered to the complainant. In deciding the level of redress the Co-Directors or complaints panel should make their decision based on the facts of each case and the loss or inconvenience incurred by the complainant.

Options include:

- An apology, written or verbal from the Co-Directors.
- An undertaking and subsequent report on improving or developing policies/procedure where these appear to be at fault/absent.
- Agreement to undertake specific work on behalf of a participant.
- In exceptional cases e.g. small financial loss where the fault of the Welcoming is indisputable and relates solely to the one aspect of the case financial compensation can be paid. These decisions must be considered by the Board of Directors.

NB. Before any of the above are undertaken advice should be sought to ensure that professional indemnity issues are explored and eliminated.

6. Recording and Monitoring Complaints

All complaints will be recorded and kept on file in the Complaints folder held in the Welcoming office. The Co-Directors will make a report once a year to the Board of Directors summarising the nature of complaints received and how they were resolved.