



# **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR STAKEHOLDERS**

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# **SECTION 1. COMPLAINTS POLICY**

## **1.1. Scope**

This policy and procedures relates to both informal and formal complaints made by stakeholders of Listowel Family Resource Centre (LFRC), and what steps should be followed if a complaint is made. This Complaints Policy and Procedures does not cover complaints made by staff as this is managed through the LFRC's Disciplinary Policy with Peninsula Services . This policy does not cover the reporting procedures for complaints which are a child protection and vulnerable adult concern. Any child protection and vulnerable adult concern is raised using 2017 Children First Guidance and Mandatory Reporting.

## **1.2. What is a complaint?**

A complaint is when you, the stakeholder, tell us you are not happy about the service we provide. It can be about anything and could include:

- When we do not deliver a satisfactory service
- giving you the wrong information
- When you receive a poor-quality service
- When you have a problem with a member of staff, or another service user.

## **1.3. Who might make a complaint?**

- Participants of programmes / courses
- People who come into the LFRC looking for information
- Parents of children in the Childcare Service, After Schools Programme or Youth Initiatives etc.
- People who avail of a service operating within the LFRC
- Other agencies who may operate from the LFRC
- People from the local community
- Organisations and agencies that the LFRC does business with etc.



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### 1.4. Principles

LFRC is committed to the principles (below) when a stakeholder wishes to make a complaint.

LFRC will:

- Make sure everyone in LFRC treats a complaint seriously and knows what to do if a complaint is received
- Provide a fair and easy process for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- Publicize and raise awareness of our procedures so that people know how to make a complaint
- Make sure confidentiality is upheld and that complaints are dealt with and investigated in a timely manner
- Endeavour to resolve a complaint, and restore relations
- Learn from complaints: gather information which helps us to review and improve our service.

LFRC ensures that if a complaint is made:

- The principles of natural justice will be recognised at all stages of the complaint procedure in relation to all parties
- That any formal complaint received into LFRC is logged, and after investigation will be categorized as either upheld or dismissed or withdrawn
- Volunteer Directors, both complainant and the person / group complained against, may at all stages of the procedures be advised and / or accompanied by a representative of their choice
- The Chairperson will keep a written record of each meeting, including details of the complainant's case and any response made. All parties will be asked to sign records of any meetings and copies will be made available to everyone



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who attended the meeting <sup>1</sup>

- The complainant and the person / group complained against will be advised of the next stage at the end of every stage of the procedure
- The date and time of all meetings will be agreed by all parties
- All parties will be allowed adequate time to prepare their case
- Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint at each stage
- The proceedings will remain confidential to those parties involved
- Copies of correspondence and written records relating to the complaint will be kept on file by the Chairperson (or alternate). The information will be destroyed after six months unless there are important reasons not to do so, in which case the complainant will be informed of the fact.

### **1.5. Responsibility for dealing with complaints**

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with LFRC Centre Manager, relevant other Line Managers, and the Chairperson of the Board.

If you wish to make a complaint you can contact the Project Co-ordinator or the Chairperson of the Voluntary Board of Directors in any of the ways listed below:

**Telephone:** 068 23584

**Email:** jackielanders@gmail.com

**In writing:** Listowel Family Resource Centre  
Ballygologue,  
John B. Keane Road,  
Listowel, Co. Kerry.  
V31 EC62

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<sup>1</sup> Where the Chairperson is the complainant, or the person / member of the group complained against, this role will be filled by an alternate. The alternate will be a Volunteer Director agreed by the complainant and the person / group complained against.



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### **1.6. Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know / or are directly involved following all relevant data protection requirements.

### **1.7. Review**

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and up-dated as required.

### **1.8. Signature**

This Complaints Policy and Procedures was discussed and agreed, and adopted by the Voluntary Board of Directors at a meeting on \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson



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### **SECTION 2: COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

The aim of the Complaint Procedures is to facilitate a fair and quick resolution of any problem or grievance. A complaint may be about the organization or about an individual in the organization whose behavior the complainant felt was inappropriate.

LFRC Complaints Procedure offers a facility to members of the public who wish to make a complaint to the FRC regarding our services or the way we conduct our business. It is the policy of the FRC to deal with all complaints in a fair manner and in accordance with the principles of natural fairness and equality.

Anyone who wishes to make a complaint about the services or the conduct of an employee of the FRC should follow the steps outlined STAGES 1, 2 3, 4 and 5.

#### **STAGE 1: Informal Complaint**

In the case of an informal complaint about the FRC, a complainant should firstly raise the complaint informally with the Chairperson of the Voluntary Board of Directors (VBODs) or the Co-ordinator or Line Manager responsible for the relevant area of work within LFRC who may be able to resolve the issue(s) immediately.

If the informal complaint is about an individual, LFRC encourages complainants to first raise the matter with the individual concerned and seek resolution.

Staff who receive informal complaints from a service user/client will always inform their Line Manager. In the case of an external tutor or service provider, any informal complaint will also be referred to the FRC Co-ordinator.

All relevant staff will make every effort to resolve the issues as swiftly as possible where appropriate.

The informal complaint and outcomes will be written into the Complaint Record



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Sheet in APPENDIX 1.

Should the issue not be resolved by informal means, the complainant can then make their complaint formally in writing to the Chairperson of the FRC. See STAGE 2.

### **STAGE 2: Formal Complaint**

The complainant should detail the complaint and provide any relevant documentation to support the complaint.

The Manager will use the Complaints Record Form attached to this document in APPENDIX 1 to further document the issues and will:

- Write down the facts;
- Take complainants name, address and telephone number;
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to the Centre;
- Explain to the complainant the Formal Complaints Process;
- Explain that the written record of the complaint must be sent to the appropriate staff / member of Voluntary Board Of Directors (VBODs) as part of any discussion or investigation of the complaint and they will be given a fair opportunity to respond.

The Chairperson will acknowledge the complaint, in writing, within 5 working days. The VBODs will do their best to resolve the matter as soon as possible and, in any event, within 15 working days. The Co-ordinator and Chairperson will ensure the complaint is investigated and take appropriate action.

If the complaint or grievance is against the Chairperson, the matter can be brought to the attention of an Officer of the VBODs who will acknowledge the complaint, in writing, within 5 working days and strive to resolve the issue within 15 working days. If this is not possible to issue a reply due to, for example, an investigation not fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.





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Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant will describe:

- The action taken to investigate the complaint
- The conclusions from the investigation
- Any action taken because of the complaint.

If the complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant through the efforts of the VBODs and Project Co-ordinator in STAGE 2, the complainant has the right to appeal—STAGE 3.

### **STAGE 3: Appeal**

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 2, and the complainant wishes to appeal, they must send a request in writing to the Chairperson (or Officer of the Voluntary Board Of Directors if the complaint concerns the Chairperson) within 5 working days.

If a complainant formally requests an appeal, this will be acknowledged in writing by the VBODs within 5 working days—this acknowledgement includes receipt of the request along with notice that a review will be undertaken.

The Voluntary Board of Directors (VBODs) will establish an independent sub-group (which does not involve anybody involved in the initial investigation) to review the complaint, actions taken in response, and any decisions made in relation to the complaint.

The sub-group concerned will:

- Decide how the complaint should be handled
- Seek support and advice to address the complaint, if necessary
- Make sure the complaint is dealt with in confidence
- Make sure a decision following a review of the complaint is issued to the complainant within 28 working days of the letter of acknowledgement.





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As an organisation, LFRC aims to be a model of best practice in relation to how it operates and conducts its business.

The VBODs will work to address the complaint. This may involve participating in training, developing appropriate Terms of Reference, participating in a facilitated discussion and / or adopting and implementing appropriate policies and procedures to ensure best practice.

### **STAGE 4: Mediation**

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 3, then the VBODs will provide the option of an external mediator. If either party refuses to engage in the process of mediation, Stage 5 will be initiated.

### **STAGE 5: Arbitration**

If the matter is still not resolved at Stage 4, the VBODs will appoint an External Arbitrator to do an investigation and make recommendations on how best to progress. Terms of Reference will be drawn up for the investigation. On completion of the investigation, and based on the recommendations of the Arbitrator, the VBODs will then conclude that:

1. There has been a breach of the LFRC's Code of Conduct and that formal disciplinary action will be taken;
2. There has been a breach of the LFRC's Code of Conduct, but of a minor nature and that no formal disciplinary action will be taken. The member of the project may be asked to take corrective action to effect improvement in practice in a specific way, within a specific time frame.
3. There is no evidence of a breach and that the complaint should not be taken any further.

The Chairperson will write to both the complainant, and the person complained against, and inform them of the decision. Both the complainant and the person complained against have a right to appeal the decision of the VBODs.



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## **APPENDIX 1: Complaints Record Form**

<b>COMPLAINTS RECORD FORM</b>	
<b>NAME OF PERSON COMPLAINING:</b>	
<b>RELATIONSHIP WITH LFRC:</b>	
<b>ADDRESS :</b>	
<b>TELEPHONE:</b>	
<b>MOBILE No:</b>	
<b>EMAIL:</b>	
<b>DATE OF COMPLAINT:</b>	
<b>Describe in detail the nature and facts of the complaint. Be as accurate as possible.</b>	
<b>SIGNATURE OF COMPLAINANT:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	
<b>COMPLAINT RECORDED BY:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	

## **APPENDIX 2: Tips for handling verbal complaints**



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When handling complaints relevant parties will make every effort to:

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen. Allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words
- Make every effort not to debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry or upset
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that they have understood the complaint by reading back to the complainant what you have noted down
- Always seek explicit consent that is “freely given, specific, informed and an unambiguous indication of the data subject's wishes by which they, by statement or by a clear affirmative action, signifies agreement to the processing of personal data relating to themselves” (GDPR) if you must record any necessary details that is personal or sensitive data
- Acknowledge the person's feelings. For example, "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what can be done, how long it will take and what it will involve
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Do not promise things that cannot be delivered
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.

### **Review:**

- This policy will be reviewed in 3 years or sooner should circumstances change