

# VSGWL Policy

## Complaints

### Introduction

VSGWL endeavours to offer the best possible service to all our stakeholders and clients. We want to ensure that any and all complaints are investigated and resolved quickly and fairly for everybody, appropriate action is taken to prevent a recurrence and to ensure continuation of a quality service.

This policy applies to the board, all staff and volunteers.

### Policy statement

VSGWL will treat any expression of dissatisfaction from any source as a complaint, and it will be dealt with according to this policy. A complaint can be defined in several ways and our definition is as follows;

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with the standard of a service, action or lack of action by VSGWL staff, volunteers or management that affects an individual or group of service users. Such an expression can be expressed verbally and/or in writing. This definition covers situations where someone believes that we have:

- Done something wrong
- Failed to do something that we should have done
- Provided services that failed to meet a high standard
- Acted unfairly, unethically or discourteously
- Acted in breach of our own policies and procedures.

Our complaints procedure can be used by anyone who is using, or has used, or is planning to use any of our services. We can also accept complaints from people who are directly affected by someone using our services.

We set out to:

- Acknowledge complaints within 2 working days;
- Resolve complaints within 14 working days;
- Or where a more detailed investigation is necessary, within 28 working days;  
or
- If we cannot meet the timescale we will explain this to the person making the complaint and provide regular updates until the complaint is resolved.

### Guidance

**Principles:** Anyone receiving a complaint should be courteous to the complainant, respond positively and offer constructive solutions. Complaints should be handled confidentially, fairly and promptly.

**Exceptions:** Where an employee or volunteer with VSGWL is raising a complaint against another person within VSGWL, the Grievance Policy should be used instead.

Where the complaint is made about the CEO, it should be recorded as per this procedure, then referred directly to the Chair of the Board (contact details available from the Office Manager).

We would usually not consider any complaint unless it has been raised within six months of an alleged incident of dissatisfaction occurring.

Complex complaints can be considered as complaints involving large numbers of people or several alleged incidents occurring over time.

Our Board of Directors have the final say in adjudicating whether a complaint should be closed following investigation despite the complainant disagreeing.

## Procedure

All complaints received, in person, by telephone, by email or in writing, must be treated in the same manner, and the following procedure will apply:

- When making a complaint, complainants should be encouraged to say or write clearly and briefly about:
  - What went wrong;
  - When and where it happened;
  - Who was involved; and
  - What they are seeking from the complaint.
- Complaints should be recorded, by the Office Manager, in the Complaints Log (which is held at Reception) and a Complaint Number assigned. Anyone receiving a complaint must pass it to the Office Manager for recording immediately;
- The Office Manager will send an acknowledgement to the complainant, copied to the CEO, within 2 working days and in this we will state the target timescale for our response;
- If the complaint can be resolved immediately this will be done and the outcome recorded in the log;
- If the complaint requires further investigation or action it will be handled by the CEO unless it is about the CEO in which case it will be passed to the Chair of the board;
- VSGWL will make best endeavours to adhere to the following timescales:
  - Acknowledge complaints within 2 working days;
  - Resolve complaints within 14 working days; or
  - Where a more detailed investigation is necessary, within 28 working days.
- If we cannot meet the timescale we will explain this to the person making the complaint and provide regular updates until the complaint is resolved;
- The complainant will be informed in writing of the final outcome within 2 working days of the resolution being agreed; and

- An annual review of all complaints raised will be undertaken and reported to the Board by the CEO. This will cover all types of complaint:
  - General
  - Those covered by the Grievance Policy; and
  - Those covered by the Prevention of the Violence, Aggression, Bullying and Harassment at Work Policy.

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