



## Complaints Policy

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# Survivor Researcher Network C.I.C.

## Complaints Policy

### Scope:

Survivor Researcher Network C.I.C. (SRN) aims to deliver high standards in everything we do. We take all concerns and complaints seriously and welcome all feedback as this provides us with opportunities to improve and maintain the standards we strive to achieve. Everyone has the right to make a complaint regarding their experiences of SRN activities and communications with any of our directors, employees, associates or volunteers (our Team), and will not be discriminated against because of it

In order to ensure that our services remain at a high and improving standard, we have a procedure through which you can let us know of for any reason you are not satisfied with your dealings with SRN.

### What is a complaint?

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.
- SRN recognises a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standards of service, or an action or omission by an employee, associate, volunteer or trustee. We use this wide definition as it catches the broad spectrum of comments and complaints and brings them under one umbrella.
- Many people talk about 'queries' or 'concerns' which are likely to be minor complaints which can be quickly resolved or they might be misunderstandings

that require further information. But they are still complaints under our definition.

- If an expression of dissatisfaction or discontent cannot be resolved immediately then SRN will take follow-up action and provide a response as outlined in this policy. We recognise that we sometimes get things wrong. Your feedback will help us to resolve mistakes faster and learn how we can do things better to improve what we do and how we do it.
- All formal complaints made to SRN are recorded and reported to the Directors, who will consider changes or improvements as a result of complaints received.

## **How we categorise complaints**

### **Services complaints**

- the standard of service you should expect from us
- the behaviour of our employees, associates or volunteers in delivering the service
- any action, or lack of action, by our Team or others engaged on SRN business

**Services complaints are dealt with using the processes set out in this policy.**

### **Comments and non-service complaints:**

- comments about our policies or policy decisions
- dissatisfaction or complaints expressed with our policies or campaigns
- matters that have already been fully investigated under this Complaints Policy
- anonymous complaints

Comments and non-service are dealt with as follows:

All non-service complaints will be looked at by a Director or another authorised member of our Team and a response, if required, will be sent within 28 days where possible.

Your comments will be used to help improve our service and the way we do things. You can make your comments by contacting any members of our staff.

Learning from feedback helps us to develop and improve our work. As well as learning from your complaints we are also interested in ideas you may have on how we might do things better. We would also like you to tell us when we do things well.

## **Who can make a complaint?**

Any person who has any contact with SRN may use the complaints procedure. This includes stakeholders, partners, funders, commissioning organisations and people attending our events.

The complaint may be made directly or by a third person representing the interests of the person.

Complaints could come from SRN members, from members of their family, from advocates or representatives, from professional workers in other agencies, or from a member of the public.

Where a complaint is from a person in the SRN Team, use of our grievance procedure may be more appropriate.

## **Our standards for handling complaints**

- We can receive complaints by email or letter, or alternatively if required by virtue of reasonable adjustments. We treat all complaints seriously.
- You can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times. We expect that you will also treat members of our Team dealing with your complaint with the same courtesy, respect and fairness.
- We will treat your complaint in confidence within SRN.
- We will deal with your service complaint promptly. We will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within 7 days and you can expect to have a full reply within 28 days. Sometimes we will not be able to send a full reply within 28 days of receipt, for example if your complaint is complex. If this happens, we will tell

you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full, keeping you fully informed of progress.

- We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your:
  - sex or legal marital or same-sex partnership status: this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed)
  - sexual orientation
  - colour or race: this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality
  - disability including mental health
  - religious or political beliefs, or trade union affiliation
  - any other unjustifiable factors, for example language difficulties, age, pregnancy and maternity.

## **Confidentiality**

Your complaint will be confidential and information about the complaint will usually only be shared with those who need to know in order to help resolve it.

If your complaint includes an allegation of misconduct by one of our Team, we may need to refer this to our Disciplinary Procedure and we will contact you about this to discuss how you might be involved in this process, and whether you are willing to share details of your complaint for this purpose.

Occasionally, if the complaint is very serious, such as revealing harm to yourself or to others, other people might have to be involved. In this situation, we would follow our Safeguarding policies which cover reporting concerns and prior discussion with the person making the complaint. We will handle all information in line with prevailing data protection regulations and our Privacy policy.

## **How to complain to us**

- If you wish to make a complaint, you can do so by email or letter.

- If need a reasonable adjustment to ensure you can register your complaint, please let us know so that we can make arrangements (including arranging to record the details of complaint by phone).
- Our contact details are in the Contacting Us section below.

## **Service complaints procedure**

### **Stage 1 - Informal**

If you are unhappy about any of SRN's service, please speak to the relevant member of our Team. We will often be able to give you a response straight away.

If you are unhappy with an individual in SRN sometimes it is best to tell them directly. If you feel this is difficult or inappropriate then speak to one of our Directors.

When the matter is more complicated, we will give you at least an initial response within 7 days.

### **Stage 2 - Formal written complaint to a Director**

If you are not satisfied with our response or wish to raise the matter more formally, please email or write to the Directors or other person appointed to receive formal complaints.

We will need some information from you:

- a clear, detailed description of what your complaint is about
- copies of any letters or emails related to the complaint
- your email address or postal address (so we can reply)

All written complaints will be logged. You will receive a written acknowledgement within 7 days

The aim is to investigate your complaint properly and give you a reply within 28 days, setting out how the problem will be dealt with. If this is not possible, an interim response will be made informing you of the action taken to date or being considered.

If your complaint includes an allegation of misconduct by one of our Team, we may need to refer this to our Disciplinary Procedure and we will contact you about this to discuss how you might be involved in this process, and whether you are willing to share details of your complaint for this purpose.

### **Stage 3 - Written appeal to the Directors**

If, after we have responded you are not satisfied, please email or write to the Directors, who will consider the matter and decide on any further steps to resolve the situation. The Directors may at this stage appoint an external adviser or investigator.

### **Stage 4 - External complaint**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your formal complaint following all stages, you can of course consider any legal remedies available to you.

## **Timescales**

We will acknowledge written complaints within 7 days of receiving each complaint. We will send a full response within 28 days of receiving each complaint. If you make a complaint in person to a member of our staff (at an event or meeting), we will record your complaint in writing within 4 days and acknowledge it within 7 days thereafter. We will then deal with your complaint in accordance with our policy for written complaints.

Extending time limits: we aim to complete our investigation into all complaints received about our service within the timescales set out above. However, in a limited number of cases - for example, if a complaint is complex or requires further breakdown, it may be necessary to extend the time limit to ensure we have all the information necessary to deal with it. If this is the case we will keep you informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and inform you of next steps.

## Remedies

When we get things wrong, we will act to:

- accept responsibility and apologise
- explain what went wrong and why, and
- put things right by making any changes required
- learn lessons from mistakes and change policies and practices where proportionate and sensible to do so.

## Recording complaints

Complaint details, outcomes and actions taken are recorded by us and used for service improvement. We record all complaints we receive and collate data from them to help us understand what types of problems are most prevalent, and how well we are doing to resolve them.

We will handle your information so that it is only processed and retained appropriately and legally, in line with data protection legislation.

## Contacting us

For Stage 1, please contact the relevant member of our team, or email us at [info@survivorresearcher.net](mailto:info@survivorresearcher.net)

For Stages 2 and 3, please contact one of our Directors, or email us at [info@survivorresearcher.net](mailto:info@survivorresearcher.net)

## Reasonable adjustments and alternative formats

You can make your complaint using your preferred method and format of communication. SRN will attempt to signpost to appropriate support, translation or interpretation services to ensure equal access to this procedure for all. You may seek support from a relative, friend or advocate.

## **Vexatious and repetitive complaints, and unreasonable or abusive behaviour**

All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with this policy. However, we do reserve the right to curtail action under the policy where vexatious and repetitive complaints or unreasonable or abusive behaviour place undue demands on our Team.

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