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Supporting Suddenly Bereaved Parents & Families

FirstLight Complaints Policy

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For attention of and action by:	Members of the Management Team, staff, interns, contracted psychotherapists/counsellors, volunteers.
Nominated Manager: Fionnuala Sheehan,	CEO

Contents

Section	Content	Page
1.0	Introduction	4
2.0	How can a complaint be made	4
3.0	Time Limit	5
4.0	Matters Excluded	5
5.0	Reporting	5
6.0	Procedures for Managing Complaints	5

FirstLight Complaints Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

FirstLight is committed to dealing with all complaints in relation to services, service delivery, staff, volunteers and service users in a timely, transparent and professional manner.

FirstLight accepts complaints when it is claimed that our activities have not accorded with fair or sound administrative practice and adversely affect the person by whom or on whose behalf the complaint is made.

Complaints are accepted from:

- Any person who has received or sought services from our organisation;
- Any person who legally has the care of the affairs of that person;
- Any legal representative of the person;
- Any other person with the consent of the person;
- If a person is entitled to make a complaint but is unable to do so because of age, illness or disability, the complaint may be made on that person's behalf by a close relative or carer of the person (parent, guardian, son, daughter or spouse or is cohabiting with the person);
- Any person who is engaged with organisation as a volunteer, member, benefactor or supporter;
- A member of the public.

Anonymous Complaints

Complainants must provide contact details to enable appropriate validation, follow up and investigation of their complaint - unless there is sufficient reason for withholding this information.

If the complaint is made my phone, or in person, the member of staff taking the complaint should encourage the complainant to provide a name and telephone number at which they may be contacted.

All anonymous complaints, both written and verbal, should be brought to the attention of the relevant line manager for a decision as to whether further action is needed.

Advocacy

All complainants have a right to appoint an advocate to assist them in making their complaint and to support them in any subsequent processes in the management of that complaint.

Any form of advocacy used must be agreeable to both the complainant and FirstLight.

2. HOW CAN A COMPLAINT BE MADE?

Complaints to be made by letter, by email or verbally, in face-to-face or telephone communication. All complaints will be documented and dated.

Complainants may lodge a complaint with either a staff member, Senior Manager or the Complaints Officer.

3. TIME LIMIT

A complaint must be made within 12 months of the date of the action giving rise to the complaint or within 12 months of the complainant becoming aware of the action giving rise to the complaint.

The FirstLight Complaints Officer may extend the time limit for making a complaint if in the opinion of the Complaints Officer special circumstances make it appropriate to do so. The Complaints Officer must give a decision of extending/not extending the time allowed in writing to the Complainant within 5 working days of making a decision.

TIMEFRAMES FOR FIRSTLIGHT'S RESPONSE

In the case of a verbal complaint a verbal response should be issued as soon as is practically possible and definitely within a 24 hour period.

In the case of written complaints, a written acknowledgement should be issued by the Complaints Officer within 5 working days and investigation should be carried out within 30 working days of the acknowledgement date.

The Complaints Officer should update the Complainant every 20 working days if the investigation exceeds 30 days.

FirstLight must endeavour to conclude the investigation of complaints within 3 months of the receipt of the complaint.

4. MATTERS EXCLUDED

The following matters are excluded from investigation under the complaints policy:

- A matter that is or has been the subject of legal proceedings before a court or tribunal;
- A matter relating to staff recruitment and selection;
- A matter relating to or affecting the terms or conditions of a contract of employment;
- A matter that could prejudice an investigation being undertaken by the Garda Síochána.

5. REPORTING

The Complaints Officer will provide the Officers of FirstLight's Council with a monthly report detailing:

- The total number of complaints received;
- The nature of the complaints;
- The number of complaints resolved by informal means;
- The outcome of any investigations into the complaints.

6. FIRSTLIGHT PROCEDURES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS

STAGE 1

Local resolution at the point of contact. This is the preferred option.

STAGE 2a

Informal resolution

STAGE 2b

Formal investigation

STAGE 3

Internal review

STAGE 4

Review by a Review Officer (i.e. by a member of the Board of Directors of FirstLight appointed by the Board.)

STAGES 1 and 2a: LOCAL RESOLUTION AT POINT OF CONTACT

A verbal complaint may be received by a Staff member/Service Manager or the Complaints Officer.

Listen, Empathise, Acknowledge, Identify the issues;

Confirm the details of the complaint with the Complainant;

Identify what outcome the Complainant would wish to result from their complaint;

The recipient of the complaint determines the appropriate management of the complaint;

A complaint form will be completed for all complaints and where possible this will be signed by the Complainant.

STAGES 2b and 3

If the complaint is not resolved at Stages 1 or 2a it will be formally investigated by the Complaints Officer. If the complaint concerns the Complaints Officer, the CEO will appoint an alternative person to formally hear and seek to resolve the complaint.

STAGE 4

If a resolution is not forthcoming at Stages 2 and 3, the complaint and all matters relating to it will be reviewed by the Review Officer who will make a finding and seek a resolution.

A record of all complaints is maintained by the Complaints Officer.