

Greenwich Winter Night Shelter



Complaints Procedure

Introduction

The procedure sets out the steps we will take when we receive a complaint from users of the service, an organisation or member of the public. It does not address complaints made by staff or volunteers (dealt with through grievance and disciplinary procedures) nor job applicants (recruitment procedure).

The Board of Trustees exists to ensure that GWNS is accountable to its users. Therefore, the Board undertakes to investigate all complaints and if the complaint is upheld action taken to ensure amend practice.

Making a Complaint – General

When a user wished to complain about GWNS's services the following procedure should be adopted. Where the complaint is against the staff the same procedure will be followed, but the Chair of the Board of Trustees substituting for the Shelter Director's role at all stages.

The complaint should be given a copy of the complaints leaflet and invited to complete the 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 staff to ensure that details of any verbal complaints are noted and that the complainant agrees with the notes.

Verbal complaints concerning waiting or opening times will be treated as informal and therefore outside the scope of this procedure although a record may be kept for monitoring purposes.

The staff shall be authorised to deal with any such complaints in a speedy but informal manner.

Addressing an Initial Complaint – Stage 1

The complainant should be invited to speak to the staff to discuss the complaint with them. This can be done in person on a complaint form, in writing by asking friend/relative to write the complaint for them or by phone and the Shelter Director should keep a record of the conversation on the complaints monitoring sheet.

At this stage all possible attempts should be made to resolve the complaint on the same day and in any event as soon as practicable after the complaint is made. The outcome shall normally be given in writing, except for informal complaints as described above. The Shelter Director 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 10 working days of receiving the complaint.

Addressing 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 Trustees either by completing a complaints form or writing a letter. Where a complainant is unable to put the complaints in writing the Shelter Director should offer assistance by writing down the details of the complaint and the reasons for wishing to progress to stage 2. The Shelter Director should read these details back to the complainant for agreement as to their accuracy. This complaint will then be referred to the Complaints Panel.

Complaints

The Board of Trustees will elect a complaints panel consisting of 2 trustees. The sub-Committee will as far as practicable, achieve a balance in accordance with GWNS's equal opportunities policy.

Where the complaint is related to a data protection issue then one of the panel members will have an understanding of the data protection regulations.

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 complainant has the right to be accompanied by a friend or family member if they wish.

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 Trustees.

Recording and Monitoring Complaints

All complaints will be recorded and kept on file in a binder marked 'Complaints'. The Shelter Director will make a report once a year to the Board of Trustees summarising the nature of complaints received and how they were resolved.

Where the complaint relates to a data protection issue. Records will be retained and will be passed to the ICO if the individual wishes to take their complaint further.

Date Policy Agreed _____

Date Policy To Be Reviewed _____