



# Volunteer Ireland

Obair Dheonach Éireann

## Complaints Policy & Procedure

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## 1. Policy

### Policy statement

Volunteer Ireland (VI) is committed to providing a high-quality complaints oversight service to our Board members, subcommittee members, employees and other affiliates and individuals (members of the public) that do not necessarily work with us. We recognise that, from time to time, we can make mistakes, and that people may feel the service they have received from us, or tried to receive from us, is unsatisfactory.

The Complaints Policy & Procedures is not designed to apportion blame, but for us to learn, respond and improve our service and to manage the complaints we may receive. To meet our commitment to address complaints fairly and impartially, the following applies, and VI will:

- Facilitate and process a complaint that is relevant to VI, to the services we provide and to our staff/volunteers who support our services.
- Deal with a complaint in a fair, transparent, and timely manner and seek a resolution at first point of contact, when possible.
- Take each complaint seriously and express sensitivity and confidentiality.
- Investigate complaints relating to I-VOL (the national searchable database of volunteering opportunities in Ireland) where it has not been addressed satisfactorily by the Volunteer Centre (VC) or any other service we provide.
- Forward a complaint about a VC, its staff/volunteers, to the relevant VC to process the complaint.
- Provide advice to individuals and organisations within the extended VI network on best practice to address complaints they have received from their employees, their volunteers, a third party or a member of the public where it is related to volunteering.
- Not respond to abusive or anonymous complaints received directly by VI or by any of its members or staff.
- Respond to each complaint received in writing (electronically or paper format) and document and record all aspects of the complaint and the complaints process undertaken.
- Work with every complaint received to ensure it is dealt with timely and impartially
- Complete the complaints process within thirty days of receipt of the complaint. However, where the process takes greater than thirty days, notify the relevant parties to the complaint as soon as possible and provide an approximate extended completion date.

### Purpose

To set out our code of practice and to offer a mechanism for dealing with complaints, ensuring that complaints are dealt with and managed promptly, fairly, and sensitively.

### Scope

- This policy applies to all VI Board members, subcommittee members, employees, volunteers (current or past including event volunteers) and others who provide services directly on VI's behalf (e.g., contractors).
- It also covers Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIO's) Volunteer Centres (VC's) or any other affiliates, bodies, or individuals (members of the public) who engage or have engaged with us in the past who wish to make a complaint.

### Responsibility

- The VI CEO is responsible for ensuring that the Complaints Policy and Procedures are implemented efficiently and effectively within the organisation, i.e., VI
- All VI Board members, subcommittee members and staff members are expected to facilitate the Complaints Policy and Procedures.

## 2. General information

### 2.1 Responding to complaints received

- a) Every complaint received (except abusive or anonymous complaints) will be acknowledged by us and we will ensure that each complaint will have a fair hearing and a timely response.
- b) We will provide a clear and impartial explanation of a complaint's outcome, even if it is not favourable to the complainant, VI, the services we provide or those in VI that the complaint is against.

### 2.2 Initiating a complaint

- a) **All VI** Board members, the CEO, subcommittee members and employees who wish to raise a complaint with VI should do so by using the VI internal grievance policy and procedures.
- b) This Complaints Policy & Procedures should be followed for all VI direct volunteers (current or past including event volunteers) and others who provide services directly on VI's behalf (e.g., independent contractors), VIO's, VC's and other affiliates who engage or have engaged with us in the past who wish to make a complaint by using the VI complaints form.

- c) **All VC** employees and VC affiliated volunteers who wish to raise a complaint that relates to VI should do so by raising their complaint directly with their VC in the first instance.
- d) **All VIO** employees and VIO affiliated volunteers who wish to raise a complaint that relates to VI should do so by raising their complaint directly with their VIO in the first instance.
- e) **All persons unconnected with VI** (members of the public) who wish to raise a complaint with VI should do so by completing the VI complaint form.
- f) If you have a complaint with VI and you are unsure how to proceed, please contact us on 0353-1-6369446 or by email to [emma@volunteer.ie](mailto:emma@volunteer.ie) and we will be happy to assist you. Alternatively, visit our 'complaints' section at [www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie).

### 3. Procedures

#### 3.1 Facilitating a complaint (informally)

##### Purpose

To ensure that all complaints are dealt with in a fair, transparent, effective, and sufficient manner.

##### Responsibility

Board Chairperson, CEO, SMT, Complaints Case Manager, All other Staff

##### Procedure

##### Step 1: Informal complaint – process a

- a) Where appropriate, complaints should be raised in the first instance on an informal basis with the person best able to resolve the situation i.e., the person/s directly involved in the complaint or by contacting a supervisor/manager. In this way, issues can be dealt with speedily and often most successfully.
- b) Where an informal approach is not appropriate or you are unhappy with the outcome of an informal approach, the complaint should be made in writing, addressed to the CEO, Volunteer Ireland, Regus House, Harcourt Centre, Harcourt Road, Dublin 2 D02HW77 or by email to the CEO Volunteer Ireland at [nina@volunteer.ie](mailto:nina@volunteer.ie). Please use the attached complaint form/document or you may set out your complaint by email.
- c) If your complaint refers directly to the CEO of Volunteer Ireland, the complaint should be addressed in writing on a private and confidential basis to the Chairperson, Volunteer Ireland, Regus House, Harcourt Centre, Harcourt Road, Dublin 2 D02HW77.
- d) All complaints received will be assigned to a Volunteer Ireland 'Complaints Case Manager' who will respond to your complaint within seven working days. If your complaint requires further investigation by Volunteer Ireland, the Complaints Case Manager will discuss this with you. It is endeavoured that most complaints can be resolved at this stage.
- e) As complainant, if you do not wish to be contacted directly by the person(s) against whom a complaint has been made, this should be noted by you in your written complaint. This will then be noted to the relevant person managing your complaint.

##### Step 2: Informal complaint – process b

- a) Once a complaint is received in writing by Volunteer Ireland, the Complaints Case Manager will record the details of the complaint and discuss the complaint with the complainant on an informal basis in the first instance.
- b) On receipt of the complaint, the Volunteer Ireland Complaints Case Manager will copy the respondent(s) i.e., the person(s) whom the complaint refers to with a copy of the complaint.
- c) An attempt will be made to agree a way forward on an informal basis or a recommended solution maybe put proposed that suits all the parties involved.
- d) The Volunteer Ireland Complaints Case Manager, if appropriate, may facilitate recommendations of informal resolution options. It is strongly recommended that all parties to a complaint engage and support the VI recommended internal process, to see if matters can be brought to a timely and satisfactory conclusion.
- e) If the complaint is resolved satisfactorily through 'Informal Process B', the Complaints Case Manager will write to the parties, setting out the informal process and the resolution achieved through the informal process that the parties arrived at in resolving the complaint.
- f) If the complaint cannot be resolved through the informal complaint process or if the informal complaint process is an inappropriate channel to process the complaint, the complaint will be escalated using the formal complaint procedures.

### Records

Record of Meetings, Emails, Complaints Form

## 3.2 Facilitating a Complaint (Formally)

### Purpose

To ensure that all complaints are dealt with in a fair, transparent, effective, and sufficient manner.

### Responsibility

Board Chairperson, CEO, SMT, Complaints Case Manager, Complaints Officer

### Procedure

#### VI – Complaints case manager (tasks)

#### The complaints case manager will:

- a) Initiate the formal complaint process for the written complaint received.
- b) In consultation with the VI Board or CEO, appoint a member of the VI management team or an independent third-party to act as 'Complaints Officer' to process and address the complaint formally.

- c) Inform the complainant(s) and the respondent(s) of the name of the Complaints Officer appointed to deal with the complaint and will seek permission from the complainant(s), respondent(s) and all such persons identified as relevant witnesses to pass on their contact details to the Complaints Officer to make contact for interview.
- d) Inform all parties who participate in the complaint's investigation process of their obligation to maintain confidentiality throughout the process, to respect the privacy of those involved by refraining from discussing the matter with any other party involved in the investigation or with any work colleagues, Board members or persons outside the organisation prior to, during and after the investigation.

### **The appointed complaints/investigation officer (tasks)**

#### **The appointed complaints officer will:**

- a) Contact the complainant and the respondent separately and invite each party to an interview meeting to allow them to give their account of the issues pertaining to the complaint.
- b) Invite the complainant and respondent to be accompanied to their interview meeting by a support person. A support person may be a family member, a friend or any other person as agreed by the Complaints Officer to attend.
- c) Interview all such persons that may be identified through the course of the complaint and complaints investigation as relevant witnesses, i.e., persons that may be in a position to provide supporting or corroborating information of relevance to the investigation.
- d) If at any time during the process or investigation the Complaints Officer concludes that a complainant has filed a complaint in bad faith, has refused to cooperate in an investigation of the complaint or has provided false information regarding the complaint, the complaint may be disregarded.
- e) Take summary meeting notes at each interview meeting. Each party attending an interview will have an opportunity to comment on the meeting notes before they are finalised. Summary meeting notes will be provided no later than 72 hours after the interview meeting concludes.
- f) Present the findings from the investigation into the complaint in the form of a final Investigation report, which will include the circumstances of the complaint, details of the investigation, its findings, and a recommendation as to whether further action will need to be taken.
- g) On the completion of the investigation, the Complaints Officer will send their Investigation Report to the Chairperson, Volunteer Ireland Board.

### **Post investigation & appeal**



- a) Circulate to the complainant and all other relevant parties to the complaint and investigation the Investigation Report.
- b) Inform the complainant if they are dissatisfied with the outcome, that they may appeal the outcome decision in writing within five working days of receipt of the Investigation Report to the (VI) CEO or Chairperson.
- c) Inform the complainant that a representative(s) of the Board or an independent third-party representative will be appointed to carry out an appeal review, who will report the appeal outcome to the Board. The appeal review will be concluded within ten working days of receipt of appeal and the decision will be final.

#### Records

Investigation Report, Record of Meetings, Emails

#### 4. Monitoring & review

- The CEO will monitor any complaints received on a weekly basis and provide a report to the Board at the next scheduled meeting or sooner if required.
- The policy will be reviewed every three years, sooner if required by the ODM & Governance Subcommittee
- The policy will then be presented to the Board for final review and ratification at the next scheduled meeting

#### Records

Records of Meetings, Document Control Register