

*Live your Best Life with...*



## **FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 People First Independent Advocacy (PFIA) believes it should be easy to give our organisation feedback, or make a complaint to us.
- 1.2 This policy is written by PFIA to help you to give us feedback or make a complaint. It tells you what will happen and what you can expect as part of this process.
- 1.3 PFIA is grateful to receive feedback, and welcomes complaints. This information helps us to make sure we are offering the best possible service to our customers.

## 2. MAKING A COMPLAINT

### 2.1 What Happens?

1. This policy is used if you wish to give feedback, or make a complaint about PFIA

All staff at PFIA will be happy to support you to give feedback, or make a complaint, if you want some help.



2. A member of PFIA staff will try to help you solve the problem.



3. If you are still not satisfied, you can write to the Chief Operating Officer. They will ask someone to look into your complaint, and try and solve the problem.



4. If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint, you can appeal the decision. The appeal would be heard by the Chief Executive Officer who would respond accordingly. If appropriate we may ask for this to be looked at independently.

2.2 Written complaints should be addressed to the PFIA Chief Operating Officer

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### **3. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FEEDBACK'?**

- 3.1 PFIA wants to receive feedback about the work that we do.
- 3.2 This is information that PFIA receives. It can be good or bad feedback. It is where the person who is telling us information doesn't necessarily want us to investigate the issue they have raised, but they want PFIA to know about it.
- 3.3 PFIA might choose to investigate feedback for their own use, as it could help PFIA to deliver better services.

### **4. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A 'COMPLAINT'?**

- 4.1 A complaint is any spoken or written statement, where a person says that they are not happy with PFIA.
- 4.2 It can be from anyone who has worked, volunteered, or received support from PFIA or who has had contact with PFIA.
- 4.3 It can be about the work PFIA do, about a member of staff, a director, our business or something we have been involved in.
- 4.4 A complaint is likely to include:
  - Being unhappy with the work that PFIA does, which could be about delays or not doing something that we should be doing.

- A disagreement between a person and PFIA which might be about our policies, procedures, or something we do
- Treatment by Staff which makes someone feel bad.

## **5. HOW PFIA LOOKS AFTER COMPLAINTS**

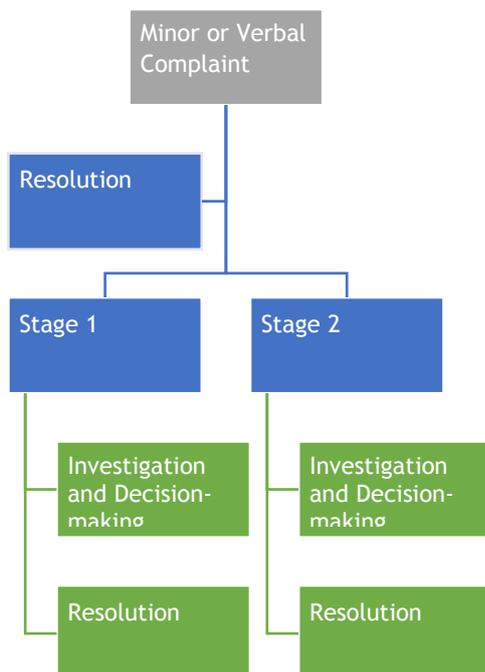
- 5.1 PFIA wants to deal with complaints as quickly as possible. Some complaints can be dealt with very simply and informally and may be resolved by an apology or an explanation about why something has happened the way it did.
- 5.2 Equally, PFIA knows that some complaints, because they are very serious, or very complicated, cannot be dealt with very quickly, and need to go through a more formal process.
- 5.3 This policy does not try to blame individuals for problems and it is not a legal process. It is not written to consider whether PFIA has been negligent. It is not part of PFIA's disciplinary policy.
- 5.4 This is why we have designed a policy that considers complaints in different ways depending on how serious they are.
- 5.5 If possible, it may be enough to address the complaint informally and agree how to resolve it quickly without having to put a formal investigation in place.
- 5.5 Sometimes, however, the issue is more complex and a Stage 1 formal investigation is started. If this does not lead to full resolution, then a Stage 2 investigation is begun.
- 5.6 Regardless of how long this takes or how complex the issues raised are, the main things that PFIA wishes to achieve are the ultimate satisfaction of the customer that the complaint has been investigated, that an apology has been offered if that is required and to demonstrate that learning has taken place.

5.7 The next section sets out the full Feedback and Complaints Procedure that should be followed when feedback or a complaint is received.

## 6. FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

6.1 This tells you about how we deal with complaints which are made to PFIA .

### Complaints Process Flowchart



6.2 Written complaints should be addressed to the Chief Operating Officer at PFIA,

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6.3 Complaints Manager:

When the Chief Operating Officer receives a complaint it is their job to appoint a named Complaints Manager to look after each complaint from start to finish. The Complaints Manager would normally be from a different department to that to which the complaint relates.

#### 6.4 All complaints:

- All complaints, no matter what the subject matter, will be taken seriously.
- All complaints will be dealt with empathetically.
- Staff will be at all times polite, courteous and sympathetic, and will remain calm and respectful.
- All complaints are treated confidentially. Only the officers dealing with complaints will be aware of the complaint.
- PFIA aims to handle complaints fairly and honestly regardless of who makes a complaint.
- PFIA treats all members of the community equally. Where appropriate, every effort will be made to make information available in a different format, or language.
- If it is found that the procedures of PFIA have failed then the issues need identifying and acting upon. The Complaints Manager is responsible for making sure this is brought forward to the appropriate place for resolution.

### 7. FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS LOG

7.1 PFIA holds a Feedback and Complaints log. This log is used to record every complaint or piece of feedback received, even if the individual does not classify their feedback as a complaint. The log is used to track the complaint process and is categorised to identify potential trends or concerns and to produce reports which would be considered by the Senior Leadership Team with a view to developing actions to sustain improvements.

7.2 All complaints must be logged in the Feedback and Complaints Log and must contain at least the following information:

- Date of complaint
- Complainant's name
- What the complaint is about
- Name of person who the complaint is about
- The service which the complaint is about

- What the result of the complaint was
- The date the complaint process was completed
- Actions undertaken as a result of the complaint

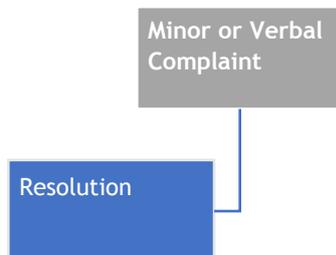
7.3 Complaints must be kept in the log for a period of 7 years following the resolution date.

## 8. SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO MAKE COMPLAINTS

8.1 If someone would like to make a complaint to PFIA, but they need some help to make their complaint, PFIA will provide information about services which may be able to provide independent support. We would support the person to access their local Citizen Advice Bureau to raise a complaint.

8.2 PFIA is committed to making it as easy as possible for people to give feedback.

## 9. MINOR OR VERBAL COMPLAINTS



When it is appropriate to do so, PFIA feels it is the best approach to ask front line staff to talk to the person making the complaint and try to find a solution straight away.

Staff should talk through the issue with the complainant. Staff should listen, and be empathic to their concerns. Staff should not accept blame, blame others or make excuses.

- 9.1 The staff member should then agree a course of action for moving forwards with the complainant, and clarify this with the complainant. It might be appropriate to put it in writing at this stage.
- 9.2 It is important to identify in this discussion what it is that the complainant feels would resolve the issue they have raised, and to address this as far as is appropriate and possible.
- 9.3 The member of staff should keep their line manager informed of their work with the complainant. The line manager should also inform the Chief Operating Officer.
- 9.4 If the suggested plan of action is not acceptable by the complainant, or the complainant is not satisfied that they have been listened to, or that the appropriate action has taken place, this would then move to a Stage 1 complaint.

## 10. WRITTEN OR FORMAL COMPLAINTS

10.1 Written complaints should be addressed to the Chief Operating Officer at PFIA

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10.2 Stage 1:



When PFIA receives the written complaint, the Chief Operating Officer will decide who the appropriate Complaint Manager will be and pass the complaint to this person.

- 10.3 Within 21 days, the Complaints Manager will provide a full explanation to the complainant, and let them know the result of the investigation. This can be either communicated in writing or offered at a meeting.
- 10.4 If the issues are too complex to be finalised in 21 days, then the complainant must be informed of the delay.
- 10.5 All communications with the complainant will be logged on the complaints log and all copies of letters etc., kept.
- 10.6 If the complaint raises a potentially serious matter, advice should be sought from a legal advisor. If legal action is taken, then the Complaints Procedure should be reviewed in line with the advice given.
- 10.7 The Complaints Manager will start the Complaints Process. They will:
  - Get permission, where possible, from the complainant to proceed if the complaint has been made on behalf of someone else.
  - Start the investigation into the complaint, or appoint someone to investigate on their behalf.
  - Set the timeframes for the complaint.
- 10.8 Write to the complainant within 5 working days of initial receipt of the complaint. This letter can be sent by email and must include:
  - Name of the person appointed as Complaints Manager and name of staff appointed to investigate the complaint, if different.
  - A copy of the complaints policy.
  - Expected date of outcome.
  - A summary of the investigation process.

- 10.9 The complainant should be invited to speak to the Complaints Manager, or the Investigating Officer. This can be done by phone.
- 10.10 The person handling the complaint should keep a record of the conversation in the complaints log.
- 10.11 If the complaint is about a member(s) of staff, the Complaints Manager should offer the opportunity for the member(s) of staff to put forward their account.
- 10.12 If a meeting is arranged to discuss the investigation then a detailed explanation of the rationale for the meeting and the planned agenda will be provided to everyone involved.
- 10.13 It is important to identify with the complainant what it is that they feel would resolve the issue they have raised, and to address this as far as is appropriate and possible.
- 10.14 Complainants will be informed that they can bring a friend/relation/advocate along to any meetings.

## 11. APPEALING A STAGE 1 DECISION

11.1 If the complainant is not satisfied then they can write back to the Complaints Manager and ask for their complaint to be dealt with at Stage 2. This is called making an appeal. The complainant needs to tell us, what parts of the Stage 1 complaint process they are unhappy with.

11.2 Stage 2:



When the Complaints Manager receives the Appeal, they have a series of options available to them at Stage 2.

It is the responsibility of the Complaints Manager to make a choice about the next stage of the process. The Complaints Manager must take into account the nature of the complaint, and be sensitive to the needs of the complainant.

### **Stage 2 Options:**

- Re-Investigation. The Complaints Manager will review the entire Stage 1 process. This is particularly useful if the complainant feels the investigation was not accurate, or thorough enough.
- Offer a meeting, or mediation to resolve outstanding issues.

11.3 Whichever option the Complaints Manager chooses they will respond to the complainant within 21 working days, from the first day of receiving the appeal letter.

## **12. MAKING A STAGE 2 APPEAL**

12.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the way that their complaint has been handled during Stage 1, then they can write back to the Complaints Manager. This is called making an Appeal. The complainant needs to tell us, what parts of the Stage 1 complaint they are unhappy with.

12.2 The Complaints Manager may choose to conduct another option from those set out above for Stage 2. This may be particularly helpful if there was a discrepancy shown between the result of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 investigations.

12.3 Because of the flexible nature of Stage 2 Appeals, the complainant will be contacted by letter to explain how the investigation will be conducted at this stage.

12.4 When the Complaints Manager is satisfied that the complaint has been thoroughly addressed at Stage 2 Appeal, the final decision will be presented to the PFIA Board of Directors at their next available monthly meeting.

12.5 The Directors may:

- Validate the investigative work which had already been completed, if there was no discrepancy between Stage 1 and Stage 2 findings and close the matter.
- Appoint a sub-group of the People First Independent Advocacy Board to review the complaint directly, which must include at least 3 members including the Chair.
- Appoint a suitably Independent Investigator to review the complaint and report back to the Board.

12.6 Once the Directors have reviewed the complaint at Stage 2 Appeal, the outcome will stand.

## **USEFUL WORDS GLOSSARY**

Complainant – the person who has made a complaint.

Dissatisfaction – where someone is not satisfied with something.

Front-Line Staff – staff who work directly with customers.

Negligent - Where proper care is not taken over something.

Resolution – An agreed way to sort out a problem, so that it is finished for all the people involved.

Vexatious – A complaint made without good cause which is designed only to cause annoyance and upset.



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