

Beara West Family Resource Centre

Complaints Policy

May 2023

The aim of the Complaints Procedure is to facilitate a fair and quick resolution of any problem or grievance. Beara West Family Resource Centre will endeavor to ensure that a complaint or grievance is dealt with quickly and at the earliest possible stage of the procedure. A complaint may be about the organisation or about an individual in the organisation.

If the complaint is about the organisation – Procedure 1 should be followed.

If the complaint is about an individual (or individuals) in the organisation – Procedure 2 should be followed.

General Principles

- The principles of natural justice will be recognised at all stages of the complaint procedure in relation to all parties to this procedure
- Volunteer Directors, both complainant and the person / group complained against, may at all stages of the procedures be advised and / or accompanied by a representative of their choice
- The Chairperson will keep a written record of each meeting, including details of the complainant's case and any response made. All parties will be asked to sign records of any meetings and copies will be made available to everyone who attended the meeting.¹
- The complainant and the person / group complained against will be advised of the next stage at the end of every stage of the procedure
- The date and time of all meetings will be agreed by all parties
- All parties will be allowed adequate time to prepare their case
- Every effort will be made to resolve the grievance at each stage
- The proceedings will remain confidential to those parties involved
- Copies of correspondence and written records relating to the grievance will be kept on file by the Chairperson (or alternative).

The information will be destroyed after six months (unless there are important reasons not to do so, in which case the complainant will be informed of the fact).

PROCEDURE 1

¹ Where the Chairperson is the complainant or the person / member of the group complained against, this role will be filled by an alternate. The alternate will be a Volunteer Director agreed by the complainant and the person / group complained against.

Stage 1

Your complaint should first be raised, informally with the Chairperson of the Voluntary Board of Directors (VBODs) who may be able to resolve the issue(s) immediately.

Stage 2

If the situation is not resolved at Stage 1 then the Chairperson will bring it to the next VBOD meeting for consideration. The Chairperson will then respond to the complainant on behalf of the VBOD.

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If the situation is still not resolved satisfactorily the complainant may write formally to the VBOD giving a detailed account of the issue(s).

The VBOD will acknowledge the complaint, in writing, within five working days.

The VBOD will then contact the appointed external HR Advisor for support. As an organisation, Beara West Family Resource Centre aims to be a model of best practice in relation to how it operates and conducts its business. Therefore, the VBOD will work with the HR Advisor to address the complaint.

PROCEDURE 2

Stage 1

Beara West Family Resource Centre encourages the resolution of concerns about a member's conduct directly, if at all possible. Complainants should first raise the matter informally, and seek resolution, with the individual concerned.

Stage 2

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 1, the complainant should contact the Project Coordinator with details of their complaint. The Project Coordinator will work with those involved to resolve the complaint.

Stage 3

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 1 or 2, then a formal complaint should be made, in writing, to the Chairperson of the VBOD. The complainant should detail the complaint and provide any relevant documentation to support the complaint.

The Chairperson will acknowledge the complaint, in writing, within five working days.

They will do their best to resolve the matter as soon as possible and, in any event, within fifteen working days.

Stage 4

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 3 then the Chairperson will seek the support and advice of the external HR Advisor to address the complaint.

Stage 5

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 3 then the Chairperson will provide the option of an external mediator. In the event that either party refuses to engage in the process of mediation Stage 5 will be initiated.

Stage 6

If the matter is still not resolved at Stage 4 the Chairperson will appoint an external Arbitrator to do an investigation and make recommendations on how best to progress. Terms of Reference will be drawn up for the investigation. On completion of the investigation, and based on the recommendations of the Arbitrator, the Chairperson will then conclude that:

1. There has been a breach of the project's Code of Conduct and that formal disciplinary action will be taken;
2. There has been a breach of the Code of Conduct, but of a minor nature and that no formal disciplinary action will be taken however changes to working practice may be required.
3. There is no evidence of a breach and that the complaint should not be taken any further.

The Chairperson will write to both the complainant, and the person complained against, and inform them of the decision.

Both the complainant and the person complained against have a right to appeal the final decision.

POLICY REVIEW

Constructive feedback on this Policy is always welcome. It must be given to the Co-ordinator of Beara West Family Resource Centre who will ensure that this is fed back to the Voluntary Board of Directors who will consider changes to be made.

This Policy was discussed and ratified at a meeting of the Voluntary Board of Directors on 8th May 2023

This policy will be reviewed 2 years from the above date.

Signed: Niamh Gonnely
Vice Chairperson