

## **MESH**

### **COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY**

MESH welcomes the views of organisations and of individuals about its services. We regard complaints as an opportunity to turn a negative experience for a service user or other stakeholder into a positive one, as well as an opportunity to learn and to improve.

When dealing with complaints we are committed to ensuring that we:

- listen and are responsive to people who raise an issue with us
- respond swiftly and at a level close to the point of service delivery
- are fair and consistent
- offer solutions and/or explanations
- offer complainants recourse to someone more senior/more independent if they wish
- ensure that staff who are mentioned in complaints receive support
- respect confidentiality
- record complaints consistently, and monitor what we record
- use complaints positively as an opportunity for learning and improvement.

In making a complaint we believe most people want:

- to be listened to;
- to have the problem accepted as important;
- to be offered a solution or explanation;
- to have their distress acknowledged and
- to be assured the same thing will not happen again.

It is therefore essential that people raising a complaint are involved in discussing their concerns and in finding solutions.

### **COMMENTS PROCEDURE**

Anyone wishing to make comments on any aspect of MESH should do so, verbally or in writing, to the relevant member of staff, the Development Manager or the Chair of the board of trustees, whichever the complainant feels most comfortable with. Where a formal acknowledgement or response is required, comments should be made in writing, and a reply will be sent within 28 days.

### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Note that this procedure can be used for MESH's service users, stakeholders, volunteers, Board members or contractors to raise concerns covered by the Public Interest Disclosure Act. This includes Whistleblowing concerns made by staff or volunteers.

**STAGE 1** Anyone wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to do so informally and directly with the member staff concerned. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue at this stage. Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the response or is unclear to whom the complaint should be addressed, or where the complaint is of a particularly serious nature requiring a formal response, the procedure at Stage 2 should be followed.

**STAGE 2** The complaint (verbally or in writing) should be addressed in the first instance to the Chair of the Board who will refer the matter on to the relevant member of staff for a reply, or reply themselves if appropriate. If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant may request that the issues is escalated to Stage 3 and the Stage 3 procedure should be followed and s/he should be given a copy of this complaints policy and procedure.

**STAGE 3** The complaint should be made in writing to the Chair, which will normally be acknowledged within seven days of receipt. The Chair will interview relevant staff members, the complainant and any witnesses and will prepare a written response to the complainant within 28 days of receipt of the complaint. This written response should indicate whether the Chair upholds or does not uphold each aspect of the complaint, offering any apology if appropriate and outlining any action taken as a result of the complaint investigation. If the action taken relates to any disciplinary action against any staff member of volunteer, the confidentiality of this person must be protected and the complainant may not be entitled to receive details of this action. If the matter is still not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the procedure at Stage 4 should be followed.

**STAGE 4** The complaint will be referred to the Board of Trustees, who will invite the individual complainant or the organisation to send up to three representatives to a meeting of a panel. This panel will consist of not less than two members of the Board and not less than two independent people (who shall not be members of MESH, its Board or staff). The panel shall be appointed by the Chair of MESH. The meeting shall be held not more than 56

days after receipt of the request. The complainant should be given at least 14 days notice of the date of this panel meeting.

The panel shall report to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees, including any recommendations for action and details of whether the board upholds or does not uphold each aspect of the complaint. The decision of the panel shall be final and given to the complainant in writing within seven days.

At all stages the complainant may be assisted and accompanied by another person. At all stages the time limit may be altered by mutual agreement.

In the absence of the Chair, the complaints procedure will be operated at Stages 2 and 3 by the person appointed to deputise.