

CVH Service User Complaints Policy and Procedures

Introduction

The Crime Victims Helpline (CVH) is committed to providing the highest quality of service to all who are in contact with us. However, if someone is dissatisfied with the quality of service provided, CVH recognises her/his entitlement to make a complaint.

1. Purpose of CVH's Complaints Policy and Procedures.

CVH's Complaints Policy and Procedures exist to provide a process by which a complaint can be made by a service user regarding any action by a member of staff, volunteer or manager that:

- a. it is claimed does not accord with fair and sound practice and
- b. adversely affects or affected that person.

In terms of this Policy any person in contact with CVH for the purpose of receiving support and/or information over the helpline, email, text or chat is designated as a service user.

It is the guiding principle of this Complaints Policy that, where possible or appropriate, an amicable solution will be sought.

2. Definition of a complaint

A complaint against CVH is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the standard of service provided by CVH. A person has a right to make a complaint about any action or inaction on the part of CVH that it is claimed does not accord with fair or sound practice and adversely affects the person making the complaint or on whose behalf the complaint is made.

3. CVH Response

CVH will respond to all complaints in a confidential, sensitive, fair and effective manner without undue delay, while also ensuring that the complexity of the issues involved is factored in. No service user will in any way be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint pursuant to this policy.

3.2 Procedures

While in no way diminishing the issue or the effects on individuals, an informal approach can often resolve matters. Where a service user has a complaint, she/he should in the first instance try to resolve the issue directly with the staff or volunteer. The objective of

this approach is to resolve the difficulty with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved. If the issue can't be resolved in this manner, the service user will be notified of the complaint procedures.

3.2.1 Complaint Stages

There are two stages in the CVH Complaints Procedure. Each stage has a Designated Complaints Officer (DCO). In Stage One, the DCO is the Executive Director. In Stage Two, the DCO is a designated member of the Board of Directors.

3.2.2 Stage One

The service user who would like to make a complaint should be directed to the Executive Director. When the Executive Director is not immediately available, the service user should provide their contact details and the Executive Director will make contact with him/her as soon as possible.

If the complaint concerns the Executive Director, then the complaint should be directed to the Board of Directors' DCO. The service user will need to provide their contact details and the DCO will make contact with him/her as soon as possible.

The Executive Director will ensure that every effort is made to resolve the complaint in an informal and amicable manner at this stage. CVH will endeavour to resolve such complaints within 14 days of their receipt.

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter at Stage One, or Stage One is deemed inappropriate (due to the complexity of the issues involved or the degree of seriousness of the complaint) the Executive Director will inform the service user about Stage Two (formal written complaints procedures).

3.2.3 Stage Two (Formal Written Complaint)

In order to allow CVH to fully and fairly handle a complaint, written complaints should be submitted within six weeks of the issue arising.

A written complaint can be submitted by post (6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin 2) or email (info@crimevictimshelpline.ie). The complaint receipt will be acknowledged within 5 working days.

In general, anonymous complaints against an employee or volunteer cannot be investigated through the formal complaints process. However, anonymous complaints will be passed to the Executive Director who will decide what action, if any, to take.

Should the service user request the complaint not be shown to the individual(s) involved, she/he will be notified by the Designated Complaints Officer (DCO) that there will not be any further investigation until the individual(s) is/are made aware of the complaint against them.

The DCO will arrange to speak with the service user in order to discuss the complaint. This can be done over the phone or in-person. Additional members of the Board of Directors and/or an independent person with appropriate expertise on the subject of the complaint may participate to assist the DCO.

The DCO will arrange a meeting with the person/people named in the complaint in order to discuss the complaint. An additional member of the Board of Directors and/or an independent person with appropriate expertise on the subject of the complaint may be present to assist the DCO.

A subsequent report will be drawn up by the DCO and shared with the Chair of the Board of Directors.

The service user will then receive a written response.

CVH will complete these procedures within 30 working days. Should the process take longer, the DCO will update the service user every 10 working days on the reasons for the delay.

In the event of a complaint against a staff member or volunteer being upheld, the employee/volunteer will be subject to the disciplinary procedures as outlined in the Employment Handbook or Volunteer Handbook.

4. Redress

CVH will offer forms of redress or responses that are appropriate and reasonable, where it has been established that a measurable loss, detriment or disadvantage was suffered or sustained by the claimant personally. This redress could include:

- An apology
- An explanation
- Admission of fault
- Change of decision
- Correction of misleading or incorrect records
- Recommendation to make a change to a relevant policy

Financial compensation is specifically excluded and will not be considered.

5. Documentation

CVH will maintain an anonymised record of complaints received, response to the complaints and actions taken. This information will be used to track the quality and consistency of the service.

The Board of Directors will be notified of all complaints received and their resolution.

6. Review of the Complaints Policy

CVH will review the Complaints Policy on a yearly basis.