

Complaints Policy

The Haven Hub welcomes feedback, comments and feedback or complaints from Stakeholders with their dealings with The Haven Hub. The Board of Management takes complaints seriously, whether it is about someone's conduct or behaviour or because someone has not adhered to agreed policies and procedures.

Values and principles

- **You have the right to complain:** We take complaints seriously. You should not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage because of making a complaint.
- **Equality:** You should receive a proper response to your complaint, regardless of your age, gender, disability, race, religion, nationality, social status, sexual orientation or political persuasion.
- **Fairness:** We believe that complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint should have a chance to contribute and respond to any investigation.
- **Safety and welfare take priority:** We will always give priority to concerns that affect safety and welfare. Issues affecting children will be treated very seriously.
- **Confidentiality:** We treat complaints as confidentially as possible. Sometimes we have to discuss complaints with other organisations. If we are worried about a risk to a person or to the public, we might need to pass on our concerns to the right authorities.

Making a Complaint:

The Haven Hub is committed to providing a comprehensive and high quality service to service users, volunteers and organisations involving volunteers. We endeavour to ensure that these services are delivered to a high standard. In delivering these services we aim to treat anyone who accesses our services with dignity and respect.

As with any service we will not always get things right. We are only human and we all make mistakes, misunderstandings arise, or we may fail to provide what was promised by us.

We hope that in the majority of cases such issues can be resolved by means of a simple apology or explanation. Occasionally this is not the case and the reasons we have a Complaints Policy and Procedure is because:

The Haven Hub believes it is only right that anyone who accesses our services has the opportunity to complain if they feel let down and for that complaint to be heard and investigated. We also see this as one of many ways by which problems with a service may be identified and lead to improvements.

Definition of a complaint:

"An expression of dis-satisfaction, either written or spoken. A complaint may be made by an individual or a group. You may wish to complain if you are not satisfied with the way you have been treated or the service you have received..."(National Mind 2009)

Complaints Procedure:

The procedure has 4 stages:

- **Stage 1** Informal Complaint
- **Stage 2** Formal Complaint (including investigation)
- **Stage 3** Appeal
- **Stage 4** Other actions may include:

Who to contact to make a complaint:

Complaints will usually be handled by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of The Haven Hub. This designated officer will then report to the Board of Directors where appropriate. If the complaint is in relation to the Chairperson of the Board, you may ask for it to be escalated directly to the Board itself.

Stage 1: Informal Complaints.

It is anticipated that the majority of complaints can be addressed at this stage. Any volunteer, staff member or board member may be able to respond to straightforward to simple complaints, while more specific or detailed complaints may be better addressed by the Designated Officer.

Informal complaints can largely be made verbally and with an immediate response. However, this does not preclude the person placing this in writing, or the response being made after time to consider it has elapsed. Unless there is good reason, all informal complaints should be responded to within **5 working days**.

What are the possible outcomes or results of my complaint?

In many cases, we are able to resolve problems informally. This might include:

- A change in the way we work
- An explanation or apology
- An agreement to communicate or act differently in future

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

Any complaint that cannot be resolved informally can be addressed by a formal investigation if the complainant wishes to pursue this route. The process of the formal complaint should be completed within **15 working days** unless there is good reason for the delay. If the matter is

urgent, we will respond more quickly. We will investigate your complaint fairly. This means that we will discuss the complaint with all of the relevant people. We reserve the right to seek advice from other appropriate organisations.

We will try to gather any information that may be relevant to handling your complaint. Sometimes we will ask to show copies of information from the investigation to other people to allow them to respond. This is because we believe in fairness and openness. We will not share information if we think that this will endanger someone's safety or welfare.

A Formal Complaints procedure has 8 stages to it:

1. Receipt of the Complaint

It is preferable but not essential that the complaint is made in writing and assistance should be offered to do so by someone not directly involved in the matter. If the complaint is made verbally this should be a brief description of the matter and should not preclude stage 3 for a more thorough discussion.

2. Acknowledging Receipt of the Complaint

This will be made in writing and detail the following:

- a. The name and contact details of the complaints investigator. This will usually be the Chairperson of the Management Committee unless he/she is the subject of the complaint in which case the contact details for a Board Member will be made available.
- b. A request to make contact to arrange a meeting.
- c. An explanation of the stages of the formal complaints process. This may be a copy of this document.
- d. An inquiry as to if they have any particular support needs such as an interpreter or emotional support of a friend.

3. Meeting the Complainant

- a. The main aim of this is to gain a better understanding of the nature and circumstances surrounding the complaint. Notes will be made by the investigator and these must be signed by both parties to say they are a true reflection of the meeting. This should be done within 3 working days of the meeting.
- b. It may be possible to resolve the matter at this stage. If so, this should be put in writing to the complainant and any other individuals concerned. The letter should also make it clear that no further action needs to be taken.
- c. If it is not possible to resolve the matter then the investigation moves onto the next stage. The complainant should be informed in writing that this will require their initial complaint and subsequent minutes of meetings about the complaint being shared with others involved in the matter.

4. Investigations

- a. Anyone involved in the complaint and any relevant witnesses will be given a copy of the complaint and subsequent minutes and to then provide a written statement responding to this. Support will be offered where necessary by The Haven Hub.
- b. The investigator, after presenting the complaint if deemed appropriate, may then choose to make a decision based on this information or to follow these up by interviewing some or all of those who have made statements. Notes will be kept of such meetings and signed and dated by the investigator.

5. Decision on the Outcome of the Investigation

- a. The investigator will then make a decision as to whether or not there are grounds for the complaint and what, if any, action is recommended. This will then be brought to the full Board of Management who will approve or disapprove with any intended action.

6. Letter to the Complainant.

A letter will be sent to the complainant and will address the following items:

- a. A historical summary of what the investigation entailed.
- b. A response to each and every item of complaint, indicating whether or not the complaint was upheld and the reasons for this.
- c. A summary of any action or change of practice that will arise from the investigation. · Where appropriate, an apology.
- d. An explanation of what steps the complainant should take if they are still dissatisfied and wish to take the matter further (The Appeal).

7. Informing relevant Volunteers, Workers and The Board of Management

- a. All volunteers, workers (paid or unpaid) and The Board of Management involved in the complaint should be informed of the outcome of the investigation. The complaint and its outcome should also be tabled on the agenda for the next Board Meeting.

8. Follow up Action

- a. Where any action or change of practice has been identified this should be allocated to a specific person and a deadline set.

Stage 3: The Appeal Process.

If the complainant is satisfied with the outcome of the investigation then they have the right to appeal directly to the Board of Management. The Board of Management will convene a panel led by the Chairperson or another named member. The Chairperson will take the lead in the appeal and also hold the casting vote if this is necessary.

Membership of the panel will be restricted to people who have had no previous involvement in the investigation of the complaint.

The panel may review the evidence gathered so far and may also, if they choose, conduct further enquiries in a similar manner to the initial investigation.

The process should be completed within **21 working days**. This time scale reflects the fact that many Board members also have full time employment.

A letter should then go out to the complainant set out in a similar way to the letter following the first investigation and in particular, highlighting where the appeal agrees or differs to the first investigation. It should also explain that the internal complaints procedure is now exhausted and no further correspondence will be entered into.

Designated Officer: Email: anne@havenhub.ie