



St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre Complaints Policy and Procedure

September 2019

ST. KEVIN'S FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

Complaints Policy

St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre's Complaints Policy and Procedures have been designed to make it easy for service users to make a complaint and for staff members to respond to complaints.

This policy and procedures relate to both informal and formal complaints made by stakeholders of St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre, and what steps should be followed if a complaint is made.

General Guidance:

Any complaint from a service user should be taken seriously and treated as such from the outset. All complaints should be dealt with courteously, promptly and professionally.

The Staff should:

- Inform your Supervisor of the situation.
- Reassure the service user that we welcome feedback as it helps us to improve our service.
- Reassure the service user that her or his complaint will be dealt with in a confidential and professional manner.
- Ensure that making a complaint is made as easy as possible for the service user.
- Apologise to the service user for any inconvenience or distress caused.
- Ensure that the Complaints Policy and Procedures is displayed visibly throughout the Centre
- If any complaint remains unresolved to the satisfaction of the service user, she or he can address the outstanding issues to the Co-ordinator or Childcare Manager of St. Kevin's FRC. If this complaint requires further action, the matter may be passed onto the St. Kevin's FRC Board of Management by the Co-ordinator.
- Learn from complaints, gather information which helps us to review and improve our work.

Procedures

The following provides an overview of how to implement the Complaints Policy for Stakeholders and outlines the main steps staff members are required to complete when assisting a service user with their complaint. St. Kevin's FRC will deal with all complaints in a fair manner and in accordance with principles of natural fairness and equality.

Informing Service Users

The Complaints Policy will be displayed on notice boards throughout the building and where practically possible, information sharing will be appropriate to the needs, learning styles, culture and ethnicity of each individual service user.

Following the Policy

Service users are encouraged to follow the stages of the complaints process. To ensure that the policy is implemented consistently **all staff members** should refer service users to the Service User Complaints Policy and provide a written copy to them.

If the **complaint is about an individual**, St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre encourages complainants to first raise the matter with the individual concerned and seek resolution. Staff who receive complaints from a service user will always inform their Line Manager. In the case of an external tutor or service provider, any information complaint will also be referred to Co-ordinator or Childcare Manager.

All relevant staff will make every effort to resolve the issues as swiftly as possible where appropriate.

The complaint and outcomes will be written into the Complaint Response Sheet.

This ensures that service user complaints are resolved quickly and effectively.

The staff member of the service receiving the complaint must

- Treat all complaints seriously, no matter how minor they may appear.
- Inform the service user of how their complaint may be dealt with, as per the Service User Complaints Policy
- Give the service user a copy of the Service User Complaints Policy if they do not already have a one.
- Gather as much information as you can to enable you to identify what the problem is. This will help to find a way of resolving the matter as quickly as possible.

Recording Complaints

The recording of all service user complaints is essential for the purpose of ensuring that:

- All complaints are being dealt with appropriately,
- The proper procedures are being followed
- All complaints must be recorded using the **Complaints Response Form**

Stages of the complaint procedure

STAGE 1: Informal Complaint

In the case of an informal complaint about the FRC, a complainant should firstly raise the complaint informally the Manager / Co-ordinator responsible for the relevant area of work within the Centre who may be able to resolve the issue(s) immediately.

If the informal complaint is about an individual, St. Kevin's FRC encourages complainants to first raise the matter with the individual concerned and seek resolution.

Staff who receive informal complaints from a service user/client will always inform their Line Manager. In the case of an external tutor or service provider, any informal complaint will also be referred to the FRC Manager / Co-ordinator.

All relevant staff will make every effort to resolve the issues as swiftly as possible where appropriate.

The informal complaint and outcomes will be written into the Complaint Record Sheet.

Should the issue not be resolved by informal means, the complainant can then make their complaint formally in writing to the Chairperson of the FRC. See STAGE 2.

STAGE 2: Formal Complaint

The complainant should detail the complaint and provide any relevant documentation to support the complaint.

The Manager / Co-ordinator will use the Complaints Record Form to further document the issues and will: The Complainant will be asked to complete the form.

- Write down the facts;
- Take complainants name, address and telephone number;
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to the Centre;
- Explain to the complainant the Formal Complaints Process;
- Explain that the written record of the complaint must be sent to the appropriate staff / member of Voluntary Board Of Directors (VBODs) as part of any discussion or investigation

of the complaint and they will be given a fair opportunity to respond.

The Chairperson will acknowledge the complaint, in writing, within 5 working days.

The VBODs will do their best to resolve the matter as soon as possible and, in any event, within 15 working days. The Co-ordinator and Chairperson will ensure the complaint is investigated and take appropriate action.

If the complaint or grievance is against the Chairperson, the matter can be brought to the attention of an Officer of the VBODs who will acknowledge the complaint, in writing, within 5 working days and strive to resolve the issue within 15 working days. If this is not possible to issue a reply due to, for example, an investigation not fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant will describe:

- The action taken to investigate the complaint
- The conclusions from the investigation
- Any action taken because of the complaint.

If the complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant through the efforts of the VBODs and Project Manager / Co-ordinator in STAGE 2, the complainant has the right to appeal—STAGE 3.

STAGE 3: Appeal

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 2, and the complainant wishes to appeal, they must send a request in writing to the Chairperson (or Officer of the Voluntary Board of Directors if the complaint concerns the Chairperson) within 5 working days.

If a complainant formally requests an appeal, this will be acknowledged in writing by the VBODs within 5 working days—this acknowledgement includes receipt of the request along with notice that a review will be undertaken.

The Voluntary Board of Directors (VBODs) will establish an independent sub-group (which does not involve anybody involved in the initial investigation) to review the complaint, actions taken in response, and any decisions made in relation to the complaint.

The sub-group concerned will:

- Decide how the complaint should be handled
- Seek support and advice to address the complaint, if necessary
- Make sure the complaint is dealt with in confidence
- Make sure a decision following a review of the complaint is issued to the complainant within 28 working days of the letter of acknowledgement.

As an organisation, St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre aims to be a model of best practice in relation to how it operates and conducts its business. The VBODs will work to address the complaint. This may involve participating in training, developing appropriate Terms of Reference, participating in a facilitated discussion and / or adopting and implementing appropriate policies and procedures to ensure best practice.

STAGE 4: Mediation

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

STAGE 5: Arbitration

If the matter is still not resolved at Stage 4, the VBODs 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 VBODs will then conclude that:

1. There has been a breach of the FRC's Code of Conduct(s) and that formal disciplinary action will be taken;
2. There has been a breach of the FRC's Code of Conduct(s), but of a minor nature and that no formal disciplinary action will be taken. The member of the project may be asked to take corrective action to effect improvement in practice in a specific way, within a specific time frame.
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 decision of the VBODs.

Monitoring and Reviewing Complaints

A copy of the **Complaint Form** and the **Complaint Response Form** must be held on file.

All complaints will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis to identify themes and areas of service provision that may need to be improved.

All complaints, and how they were resolved, must be reviewed by the appropriate staff team on a monthly basis. The service should then assess if there are particular areas of concern and develop procedures to address these.

It is the responsibility of Co-ordinator to ensure that **Complaint Forms** and **Complaint Response Forms** are notified to the Board of Management as soon as each complaint has been resolved.

Guidelines on handling verbal complaints

- When handling complaints relevant parties will make every effort to:
- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen, allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words.
- Will make every effort not to debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry or upset.
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary.
- Show that they have understood the complaint by reading back to the complaints what you have noted down.
- If recording any necessary details that are personal or sensitive information, always seek explicit consent that is “freely given, specific, informed and an unambiguous indication of the data subjects wishes by which they, by statement or by a clear affirmation action, signifies agreement to the processing of personal data relating to themselves.
- Acknowledge the person’s feeling, for example “ I understand that this situation is frustrating for you”
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issues.
- Be clear about what can be done, how long it will take and what it will involve
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Do no promise things that cannot be delivered.
- Make sure the person understands what they have been told
- Whatever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.

Overview of St. Kevin's Family Resource Centre's Policies and Procedures for Grievances, Complaints and Concerns.

Employees Hosted Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures• Protected Disclosure a.k.a 'Whistleblowing' Policy• Complaints Policy
Volunteers and Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complaints Policy• Whistleblowing policy• Volunteer Policy• Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy
FRC Service Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complaints Policy• Groups Using the Centre Policy• Children First and Vulnerable Adults Policy• Data Protection Policy (including Data Breach and Subject Access Request)
Childcare Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Childcare Centre Complaints Policy• Children First and Mandatory Reporting
Child Protection / Vulnerable Adult Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children Protection Policy (Children First Guidelines and Mandatory Reporting)• Designated Liasion Person / Tusla Social Work

