

## **EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE**

**References**

<b>Synopsis</b>	This policy explains RISE Mutual CIC (RISE) process for dealing with external complaints.
<b>Prepared By</b>	John Gleeson, Senior Human Resources Adviser
<b>Reviewer/s</b>	Senior Leadership Team,
<b>Owner</b>	Human Resource Manager
<b>Approved by</b>	RISE Board
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	
<b>Implementation Date</b>	1 April 2015
<b>Review Date</b>	
<b>Document End Date</b>	
<b>This is a new Policy</b>	Yes
<b>This replaces an existing?</b>	
<b>Version</b>	1.1

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## **1. The RISE Approach to Customer Complaints**

RISE acknowledges the definition of a complaint as “any expression of dissatisfaction about an aspect of our service, whether justified or not, which requires a response”.

Any complaints are an opportunity to correct what has gone wrong. They provide potential for individual and corporate learning. RISE intends to provide a courteous, appropriate and timely response to individual complaints and to consider whether patterns have emerged that require a more strategic or corporate response.

As with all formal complaints, the aim should be to resolve issues without the need for this procedure. This procedure is in place for when resolution is not possible using informal means.

RISE is committed to equality and fairness, all employees of RISE, partners, Service Users and members of the public should be treated fairly and with respect, and discrimination of any form will not be tolerated. Any employee who is found to have harassed, bullied or victimised an individual will be subject to disciplinary action. Complaints will be taken seriously.

Complaints must be submitted within 6 months of the action, decision, or failure which is the subject of the complaint, and will not be eligible for investigation if the subject matter is under criminal investigation or is the decision of a Court, a statutory tribunal, the Parole Board, the Crown Prosecution Service or the Criminal Cases Review Commission or if the issue or issues that form the basis of the complaint have been determined by any of these. In these cases complainants may be advised to seek legal remedies.

## **2. Essential Support and Legalities**

### **2.1 Small Print!**

This policy and procedure will be subject to RISE’s Equality Impact Assessment on a periodic basis.

This policy has no contractual effect.

This policy does not relate to staff-related complaints

### 3. Procedure

3.1 Formal complaints must be made in writing and be signed by the complainant unless permission has been provided for another person to act on the complainant's behalf. Requests for a complaint to be formally investigated should be submitted in writing to:

**Business Support Manager**  
**complaints@risemutual.org**

3.2 The Business Support Manager (BSM) will receive requests for formal investigation on behalf of the Directors.

3.3 The BSM will respond to complainants within five working days to confirm if their concerns are eligible for investigation and to indicate that a response should be provided within 25 working days.

3.4 The BSM will appoint an independent (meaning independent of the case and the facts) Investigating Officer to investigate the complaint.

3.5 The Investigating Officer is expected to speak with the complainant, preferably face-to-face.

3.6 A report of the findings and outcome of the investigation should be sent to the complainant by the Investigating Officer within 25 working days.

3.7 In the event that the Investigating Officer requires more time to complete their enquiries, they will write to the complainant to explain and to indicate how much longer they require.

3.8 At the conclusion of any formal investigation complainants will be notified by the Investigating Officer that if they remain dissatisfied they have 20 working days to request an appeal hearing.

## **4. Appeal**

- 4.1 Requests for an appeal against the outcome of formal complaint investigations must be made in writing to the BSM within 20 days of the complainant receiving the response letter. Requests should specify which aspects of the investigation or findings have left the complainant with continuing concerns. It will not normally be appropriate to accept an appeal simply on the grounds that the complainant disagrees with the judgement.
- 4.2 Complainants requesting an appeal hearing should receive an acknowledgement from the BEA within five working days.
- 4.3 An appeal panel consisting of two Line Managers and a member of the Employee Council not involved in the subject of the complaint or its investigation, will be convened. They will consider if the investigation was sufficient and reasonable.
- 4.4 The Investigating Officer is required to attend the appeal hearing to answer questions about their report. The panel will consider whether they would be assisted by the attendance of the complainant. However, attendance by the complainant or any representative is not a right.
- 4.5 The outcome of the appeal will be sent in writing to the complainant within 20 working days.