

Reality Adventure Works in Scotland Ltd.

COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Policy

- 1.1 Reality Adventure Works in Scotland Ltd. (Reality) aims to provide high quality, accessible services to its members, staff, volunteers and others who seek its help and support.
- 1.2 As part of this commitment we have established a complaints procedure the aim of which is to enable individuals and organisations using our services to make suggestions and complaints.
- 1.3 Suggestions and complaints can be made both about the services that Reality provides, and those that it is considered should be provided.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The principles underlying our procedures are as follows:
 - i) We will plan, provide and deliver services in a non-discriminatory way.
 - ii) We will make available to users of our services of our Complaints Procedure and enable them to make easy use of it if they wish to do so.
 - iii) We will respond to all complaints and suggestions within a prescribed time.
 - iv) The Project Manager will hold the responsibilities of Complaints Officer for the organisation.
 - v) Complaints may be made to any member of staff, including the Project Manager. Complaints made to members of staff of Reality other than the Chairperson of the Board will always be referred to, and dealt with by the staff member or the Project Manager.
 - vi) Complaints will be resolved as quickly as possible and dealt with in most instances by the immediate line manager of the staff member(s) involved in the complaint, or by the Chairperson of the Board.
 - vii) Complaints will be dealt with in confidence, in accordance with our Confidentiality Policy.
 - viii) If a complainant wishes to challenge a decision or response made to a complaint, they may appeal to a higher level within the organisation and will be given details as to how to do so.

- ix) The complaints procedure will be part of the process of monitoring the quality, effectiveness and non-discriminatory nature of Reality's services. It will be monitored periodically to check its effectiveness and efficiency, and will contribute to organisational planning.
- x) This complaints procedure operates separately from disciplinary or grievance procedures for staff.

3. REALITY Complaints Procedure : Internal Briefing Paper

3.1 What to do when an organisation/individual wishes to make a complaint. The principles underlying the operation of a Complaints Procedure are:

- a) Users of Reality services must have the right to complain about, or make suggestions about, the services we offer, and they receive.
- b) Users of Reality services will be informed of their right to access the Complaints Procedure, and that their complaints and suggestions will be responded to formally, and sensitively within its framework.
- c) Many complaints will be dealt with informally. Informal complaints will be recorded, and used for monitoring purposes, as they are part of the organisation's Complaints Procedure.
- d) Reality recognises that making a formal complaint is a stressful experience, and will endeavour to relieve that as far as it is able to do so.
- e) Users are made aware that all complaints, whether made informally or formally, will be responded to and recorded.
- f) Any member of staff may receive complaints. Informal complaints will be reported to the staff member concerned, and formal complaints will be referred immediately to the Project Manager for further action.
- g) Complainants will be advised of how the Reality Complaints Procedure operates, and given a copy of the procedures.
- h) Staff will refer to the terms of the Complaints Procedure when responding to complaints.

4. IN THE EVENT OF A COMPLAINT ABOUT A MEMBER OF STAFF BEING UPHELD, THE UNDERNOTED PRINCIPLES WILL BE UPHELD:

- 4.1 Decisions taken about initiating disciplinary action will be taken separately from the operation of the Complaints Procedure. Implementation of disciplinary procedures will be a separate action of management, as set out in the Employee Handbook.
- 4.2 Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action initiated as the result of use of the Complaints Procedure, as it does not form part of it.

5. Having a Complaints Procedure can be a useful tool in assessing how well Reality is providing its services. Recording complaints is therefore an important task.

- 5.1 The Project Manager has a Complaints Log for this purpose, and will provide a report on complaints received, and the action taken, to the Board, annually.
- 5.2 The Complaints Log and all correspondence will be treated as confidential material.

6. Procedure

- 6.1 Everyone who comes into contact with Reality's Befriending Scheme or Activity Breaks Programme has the right to be treated fairly and with respect.
- 6.2 If they are unhappy with the way they or anyone else has been treated – whether they are a volunteer, a young person, a friend or family member of a young person – they have the right to complain.
- 6.3 The complaints procedure is not to be mistaken for the normal channels of communication; it is an additional process which can hopefully be used to resolve any difficulties amicably.

7. Making a complaint

- 7.1 Whilst Reality should not prescribe causes for complaints, examples of possible reasons are laid out below.
- 7.2 We will respond to complaints and suggestions about the services we offer, the actions of our staff, and services that have not been received, and that in the view of the complainant, should have been available.

8. Examples of causes for complaint / suggestions:

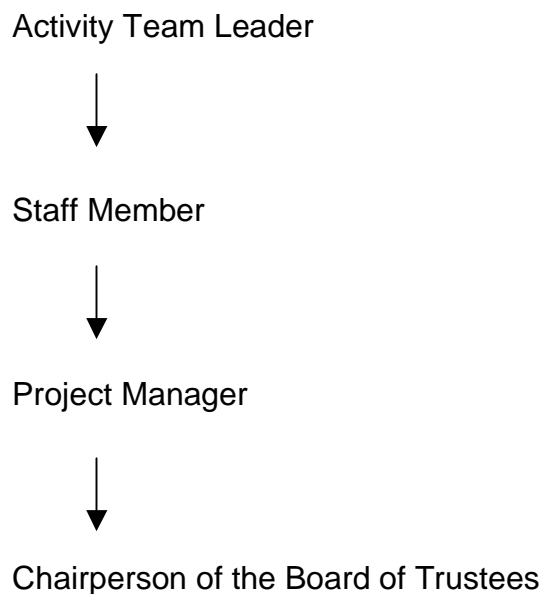
- i) Have you been refused a service requested from Reality?
- ii) Do you feel dissatisfied with any service given by Reality?
- iii) Are you unhappy with the way you have been treated by Reality staff?
- iv) Do you wish to challenge a decision or statement made, or an action taken by Reality?
- v) Have you any suggestions which you would wish to make to help Reality improve

and develop its practice and services?

9. The stages of a complaint

- 9.1 There are four stages to our complaints procedure. Our principle aim is to resolve the complaint as effectively as possible without the need to go on to the next stage.
- 9.2 The person complaining can write or talk to each of the following in turn (see diagram Fig. 1).
- 9.3 They would always have the right to attend any of these meetings with someone else or get them to attend on their behalf. (There may however be limitations on our action if they do not attend or write themselves).
- 9.4 Each Reality representative will always take the complaint seriously and all attempts will be made to resolve the situation before it is felt necessary to go on to the next stage.
- 9.5 At all stages complainants will receive a written acknowledgement of their complaint, along with any indication of any action taken.

Fig. 1



- 9.6 Reality has a staff and voluntary disciplinary procedure detailed in the documents Befriending Policy Documents, dated Jan 2008 and Protecting Children, Young People and Volunteers towards good practice (Activity Breaks dated August 2008)

10. How to make a complaint

- 1) You can make a complaint verbally to a member of staff. Your complaint will be put in writing, by a staff member, with your agreement. It will then be referred to the Project Manager.

OR

- 2) You can make a complaint in writing to the Project Manager, who will:
 - a) acknowledge receipt within 4 working days
 - b) send you a copy of Reality's complaints procedure
 - c) investigate your complaint.
- 3) You can involve a representative eg Social worker or friend / colleague both in supporting you to make your complaint and in any meetings where the complaints procedures are activated.

11. Reality's response to your complaint

- a) You will receive a written response to your complaint within two working weeks.
- b) If a written reply is inappropriate or insufficient you will be offered the opportunity to meet with the staff concerned along with the Project Manager to discuss the matter in detail in an attempt to meet a satisfactory outcome.
- c) You will be informed in writing of the outcome of any such meeting, normally within two working weeks of the meeting.
- d) The response will inform you of the outcome of your complaint.

11.1 Additional Information

- a) Complaints about the Project Manager should be made to the Chairperson of the Board of Reality.

12. Making an Appeal

- 12.1 If you are not satisfied with the outcome or response to your complaint you may appeal to the Project Manager, if it has been dealt with by a staff member

- or the Chairperson of the Board, if dealt with by the Project Manager.

- 12.2 This should be done within a maximum period of twenty eight days of receiving written notification of the outcome of your complaint.
- 12.3 If you are still dissatisfied you can raise the matter directly through the Chairperson with the Board, which will normally appoint a small working group from among its membership, to deal with the complaint. You will be informed of the outcome as quickly as possible.
- 12.4 The decision of the working party will be final so far as the organisation is concerned.
- 12.5 However, you should remember you have the right to write to your local Councillor or MSP.