

Friends Families and Travellers Complaints procedure

This procedure is for service users who wish to complain about an FFT employee or the service that they have received from FFT. Any member of FFT staff wishing to make a complaint should use the Grievance Procedure as the appropriate mechanism for resolving their concerns.

FFT seeks to maintain an excellent standard of service for all service users but recognises that in any organisation things can sometimes go wrong. Where you are not satisfied with the service you have received it may be helpful to discuss it informally with the appropriate member of staff or their manager to see if your concerns can be resolved informally. If this is not possible then the next step is to lodge a formal complaint.

At the earliest possible stage, where somebody has notified a member of FFT staff that they wish to make a complaint, or are considering making a complaint they will be given a copy of this complaints procedure in order to assist them with the process.

The first step in making a formal complaint is to write to the Director, Sarah Mann at Friends, Families and Travellers, Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG, marking the envelope 'personal and confidential'. Alternatively the complaint can be made by telephoning Sarah Mann on 01273 234772 or by sending an email to director@gypsy-traveller.org making it clear that you wish the matter to be dealt with as a formal complaint.

In lodging the complaint you should provide as much detail as necessary about the nature of your complaint and why you are not happy with the service you have received. The Director will aim to acknowledge the receipt of your complaint in writing or by email within three working days but may wish to discuss your concerns with you, and to speak to any members of FFT staff involved, before responding formally to you. The Director will seek to send you a formal response to your complaint within 15 working days of receipt. If you are still not happy with the outcome you can ask for the matter to be considered by a Trustee. You should do this in writing, addressing your letter to 'The Chair of the Trustee Board' c/o Friends, Families and Travellers, Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG marking the envelope 'personal and confidential'.

The Chair of Trustees will identify an appropriate member of the Trustee Board to investigate the complaint and will notify you in writing as to who this will be. The Chair may undertake to do the investigation personally. The Trustee undertaking the investigation may wish to speak with you to discuss the complaint and will also interview the members of FFT staff concerned, including the Director. They will also seek to respond to your complaint within twenty working days.

If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, or if your complaint is about the Director, you may ask for the matter to be considered by the FFT Trustee Board. You should write to 'The Chair of Trustees' c/o Friends, Families and Travellers, Community Base, 113, Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG marking your letter 'personal and confidential'. The Trustee who investigated your complaint at the previous stage may take part in the discussion at the Board meeting but will not participate in any ensuing vote on the matter. The Board may invite you to the meeting (normally held in Brighton) to make representations about your complaint.

The complaint will be considered at the first Board meeting following the receipt of your letter by the Chair of Trustees (provided this is received at least five working days before the date of the meeting) and you will be informed in writing of the outcome within five working days of the meeting.

The Board's decision at this stage will be final.

If your complaint is upheld at any stage FFT will seek to remedy the unsatisfactory service that you have received in the most appropriate way. This may simply be by way of an apology or it may involve changing the organisation's systems or procedures or disciplining particular members of staff.

FFT hopes that, at the end of the process, whatever the outcome, you will feel that your complaint has been taken very seriously and that you have received fair and appropriate treatment.

FFT will maintain a record of all complaints received, the procedure followed, and the outcome, and this will be considered by the FFT Trustee Board on an annual basis.

Malicious and/or Persistent Complaints

FFT is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

There is no one single feature of unreasonable behaviour. Examples of behaviour may include, but not limited to those who:

- Persist in pursuing a complaint when the procedures have been fully and properly implemented and exhausted.

- Do not clearly identify the precise issues that they wish to be investigated, despite reasonable efforts by staff, and where appropriate, the relevant independent advocacy services could assist to help them specify their complaint.
- Continually make unreasonable or excessive demands in terms of process and fail to accept that these may be unreasonable e.g. insist on responses to complaints being provided more urgently than is reasonable or is recognised practice.
- Continue to focus on a 'trivial' matter to an extent that it is out of proportion to its significance. It is recognised that defining 'trivial' is subjective and careful judgment will be applied and recorded.
- Change the substance of a complaint or seek to prolong contact by continually raising further issues in relation to the original complaint. Care will be taken not to discard new issues that are significantly different from the original issue.
- Consume a disproportionate amount of time and resources.
- Threaten or use actual physical violence towards staff.
- Have harassed or been personally abusive or verbally aggressive (this may include written abuse e.g. emails).
- Repeatedly focus on conspiracy theories and/or will not accept documented evidence as being factual.
- Make excessive telephone calls or send excessive numbers of emails or letters to staff.

What happens when a complaint is considered to be unreasonable or unreasonably persistent?

The policy and reasoning will be explained to the complainant. The organisation may choose to put limits on contact from the complainant and will set out the timescale and nature of these.

The organisation will set out what it will and will not consider under its complaints process and how future complaints with the same content or theme will be responded to.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing.

Procedure reviewed: April 2019

Next review scheduled for: April 2022