

National 3rd Party Complaints Policy and Procedure

August 2022

Relationships Scotland Member Services are not required by law to investigate 3rd party complaints. Relationships Scotland however recommends that all Member Services adopt this policy to investigate 3rd party complaints as good practice.

Relationships Scotland Member Services welcome comments on the service they provide to clients. All comments on the standard of client service provision are taken very seriously.

The Relationships Scotland Complaints Policy, Procedures and Guidance is relevant when a client has a concern with the service they have received. However, there are times when someone who did not personally receive a service from a Relationships Scotland Member Service may have a complaint to make and a reasonable belief that the information, they disclose is accurate.

For example a complaint will be accepted where an advocate is clearly working on behalf of a client and the client will be encouraged to engage as well if possible, however, if a solicitor raises a complaint on behalf of a client they will be encouraged to ask the client to engage directly. A client cannot raise a complaint on behalf of another client.

3rd party complaints will be considered by the Service Manager or Chair of the Member Service. Complaints can be made verbally, in writing or anonymously. All complaints will be dealt with impartially and confidentially.

Complaints are accepted within 1 year of the date of allegation

STAGES

Informal Stage

Initial contact with the Member Service or if contact is made with the National Office the complaint is passed to the Member Service. The Manager or Chair of the Member Service will consider the validity of issue as a complaint. If deemed appropriate the Manager will aim to resolve the matter informally with the person making the complaint.

Formal Stage

If the matter isn't resolved at the informal stage, then a Formal written complaint can lodged with the Manager of the of the Service. The complaint will be formally considered by one or more Board members and the outcome will be made known to the person making the complaint. If the complaint was raised anonymously, the outcome of the complaint will be considered by the Board of the Member Service.

We do understand that the circumstances around a complaint can sometimes lead to heightened emotions and we will do our best to help resolve matters as quickly and effectively as possible. However, if a complaint is accompanied by aggression on the part of the complainant, harassment of any member of staff, board member or volunteers in person or by written communication or unwillingness to accept the terms of the complaints procedure – the Member Service is within its rights to refuse to meet with the complainant during the process and restrict communication to emails only. Harassment or intimidation of workers will not be tolerated.

NATIONAL 3rd PARTY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Alleged Issue
Initiating Complaint

Informal Stage

The complainant should contact the Service Manager in person, by phone, email or letter and the Manager will endeavour to resolve the issue with the person making the complaint.

If the complaint is anonymous, the service Manager or Chair will consider if the complaint is valid.

If after discussion with the Manager/ Chair the issue is not resolved, or if an anonymous complaint is considered valid

Formal Stage

Unless the complaint is anonymous, a formal written complaint should be sent to the Manager of the Service, who will handle (but not investigate) the complaint process. The letter must be **signed** and **dated** letter and sent within one year of the incident relating to the complaint.

The letter will be acknowledged by the Manager of the Service within 10 working days of receipt.

The complaint will be formally considered by one or more Board members.

The complainant and any person complained against will, within **20 working days** of the formal complaint being received, be invited to separate meetings or to take part in a phone call which should take place within **20 working days** of the offer being made.

The Chair or nominated Board member will send a letter confirming the outcome of the complaint within **20 working days** following the meeting / telephone conversation.

If the complaint was raised anonymously, the outcome of the complaint will be considered by the Board of the Member Service.

If a 3rd party complaint is upheld then the National Disciplinary Procedures may be instigated against anyone who has had a complaint upheld against them. Any learning will be used by the Member Service to improve future service delivery.

Timescales will only be increase from those stated in the policy in exceptional circumstances.