

Survivors Fund (SURF) Complaints Procedure

SURF has a Complaints Procedure so that (a) staff, partner organisations or any stakeholders who are aggrieved know how to make a complaint, and are thus confident that it will be properly addressed, (b) SURF staff know how to deal with a complaint, and who to refer it to, so as to provide resolution, and (c) the charity's trustees and CEO can be confident that complaints and grievances are being addressed appropriately.

There are separate arrangements, not detailed here, for staff complaints. There is, as is required by law, a formal grievances procedure for all employees, which is written into each employee's Statement of Terms, as part of their Contract of Employment. This area is entirely outside the scope of the Complaints Procedure for the rest of SURF's activities.

The Complaints Procedure is not intended as a process to appeal against policy decisions already decided by trustees or at AGMs.

SURF's policy concerning all grievances and complaints is to try to avoid them arising in the first place, but where they do arise to address them as quickly as possible so they do not grow or fester. The first duty of both the complainant and the 'complained to' should therefore be to try to resolve any unhappiness as quickly as possible. A prerequisite of this is that a complainant knows the right person or place to address their concern, or ultimately to make their complaint. They may also require some help to progress their concern in the most constructive manner. The Complaints Procedure outlined below tries to assist this process.

The three stages of the Procedure are as follows:

Stage 1

Both parties should try to resolve the problem without the need for it to be escalated elsewhere. Advice is available from the CEO or Chair if a complainant does not know the right place for a grievance to be addressed. Ultimately, if a resolution is not forthcoming between the parties then the complainant should write a letter to the 'complained about' (which can be sent electronically) and should expect a written response within 28 days. If the complaint is about the organisation in general, the process is the same.

Stage 2

If the first stage of the procedure does not resolve the grievance, then the complainant should formally make a complaint. This should be done in writing, addressed to the CEO and copies of the written letter from the first stage and any response received enclosed. This too can be undertaken electronically.

The CEO will then independently review the complaint made and seek advice of why the complaint has been rejected. The CEO will then decide whether or not the complaint is

justified, what remedy, if any, should be provided, and will then convey that decision, in writing, to all parties concerned. This should be communicated to both the complainant and ‘the complained about’ at the same time, and within 28 days. This time is designed to allow sufficient for the CEO to make any necessary enquiries, etc.

The CEO is likely to refuse any ‘second stage’ complaints where the first stage has not been carried out, or that are not put in writing, or where the complainant refuses permission for their complaint to be shown to the parties that they are complaining about. Trustees and other officers receiving complaints direct should refer the complainant to the proper procedure, or to the CEO.

If the first stage involves a grievance with the CEO, then in this circumstance, the formal complaint in the second stage should be made to either of the Chair, who will then perform the duty that would otherwise fall to the CEO.

Stage 3

If either party is dissatisfied with the outcome determined by the CEO at the second stage outlined above, then there is a final stage of appeal, which can be made to the trustees. This should be addressed to either of the Chair (and copy sent to the CEO). It would then be brought to the next available meeting of the Board of Trustees that is due to be held at least 21 days after the notice of appeal is received by the Chair. The trustees would then consider the appeal based on the written evidence already amassed in stage two, and give a final decision. A complainant would not have a right of attendance at the meeting of trustees, unless the trustees felt it appropriate to make such an invitation.

Unless such an appeal (stage 3) is made within 28 days of the CEO’s ruling (stage 2), the complainant should accept and adhere to the Stage 2 ruling.

If the Chair, in consultation with the CEO, believe the Stage 3 appeal to be frivolous and not of a serious nature then the Chair may refuse it.

Contacts

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Chair

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