



FORMERLY KNOWN AS SHABBAT WALK

# COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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*Date reviewed: 07/11/2023*

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8 Rodborough Road London NW11 8RY  
Tel: 07506750023 | Email: [office@hih.org.uk](mailto:office@hih.org.uk)  
Registered Charity No 1182698

The Charity aims to provide its users and other stakeholders with the best possible service. We recognise that from time to time there may be occasions when users of our services feel that the quality or level of service provided falls short of what they could reasonably expect. It is Hand in Hand's policy to receive complaints and consider them as opportunities to learn, adapt, improve, and provide better services.

This policy and procedure also applies to employees who wish to make an informal or formal complaint but should not be used in cases of grievances or whistleblowing. Staff complaints will similarly be viewed as opportunities to learn and improve the work environment and services. Feedback from staff, users and stakeholders helps us to understand where we may need to make improvements. We will seek to put things right fairly and proportionately, with a focus on person care.

To this end, we aim to make it easy for staff, users and stakeholders to make suggestions, comments, and complaints, and will place notices about how to do so in our centre of operations, on our website and in our communications.

We treat all complaints seriously and with confidentiality.

## INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

An informal complaint means a complaint that has been received by Hand in Hand by telephone, email, post or in person, but which has not been submitted as a formally written complaint.

Informal complaints are suited to less serious issues, such as interpersonal conflict or the application of policies and procedures. This may also be appropriate where the parties are likely to continue working together.

We greatly value the continued goodwill of staff, service users and other stakeholders, and we aim to handle complaints quickly, effectively and in a fair and honest way. We would expect to resolve any day-to-day difficulties or complaints informally and as quickly as possible, (within 24 to 48 hours, but where issues are more complex, within 7 days). In the first instance, we would expect the complaint to be raised directly with the member of staff concerned. At this, and at any subsequent stage, the complainant may be accompanied or supported by a friend or relative, but there is no right to legal representation at internal meetings or disciplinary hearings.

If staff, volunteers, or management receive an oral complaint, they should listen sincerely to the concerns raised by the complainant. Any contact with the complainant must be polite, courteous, and sympathetic. At all times, staff and managers must remain calm and respectful. Staff receiving a complaint of significance should make a written record of it.

We aim to respond to informal complaints within one week.

# INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

When a complaint has not been successfully resolved informally, the complainant may choose to continue and formalise the complaint by completing a formal written complaint or complaint form.

All non-anonymous complaints filed necessitate a response.

Our complaints procedure is as follows:

1. The complaint should be made in writing by letter or email to the CEO who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, in writing, within 10 working days. If the complaint is about the CEO, the complaint should be addressed to the Trustees (marked 'confidential').

1.1 If the complaint raises potentially serious concerns, legal advice should be obtained. If legal action is taken at this stage, any investigation by Hand in Hand under the complaint procedure should cease immediately.

2. This is what the Charity will do:

2.1. The CEO (or Trustee) will investigate the circumstances leading to the complaint and will communicate the results of the investigation to the complainant within a reasonable time frame – normally within 14 working days of the complaint being received. If the issues are too complex for the investigation to be completed within 14 days, the complainant will be informed of the delay.

2.2. Whether the complaint is found to be justified or unjustified, the CEO (or Chair of Trustees) will decide on any necessary further action, including an action plan for complaint resolution, an apology if necessary, and an explanation, and meet with the complainant to inform him/her of the outcome. Results of the investigation should be documented internally.

2.3. The complainant will have the right, if dissatisfied with the results of the enquiry, to put their case, in writing, to an appeal panel of three Trustee Board members.

2.4. The appeal panel will consider the appeal within 14 days of the appeal being received.

2.5. If the appeal is found to be justified, the appeal panel will agree on any necessary further action. The decision of the appeal panel is final and no further appeal within the charity is possible.

2.6. The outcome of the appeal panel will be communicated in writing to the complainant within 7 days.

2.7. The CEO will keep the Trustee Board informed of the number and nature of complaints, and the outcomes. He will report to the Board on this at least annually. Reports will include any significant actions or wider learning cascaded to staff and/or volunteers.

*This policy should be shared with all management, staff, and volunteers of the charity.*

*Each employee is responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy.*