

Scope

This policy is authorised by the trustees and applies to the organisation as a whole. Next review date is June 2015.

Summary

All complaints against the organisation or its staff will be taken seriously and followed up promptly and without prejudice. Appropriate corrective action will be taken.

This policy excludes complaints raised on behalf of employees or voluntary workers which are classed as grievances and are subject to the Disciplinary Policy.

If a client or member of the public registers a complaint we will make a note of the comments; investigate and aim to explain within 28 days what happened and what went wrong; and if appropriate make sure that:

- The complainant has opportunity to discuss the issue with those concerned,
- an apology is given, and
- we do what we can to prevent similar problems occurring again.

Procedure for response to a Complaint

The following actions will be taken, in the event of ACBF receiving an expression or complaint of dissatisfaction.

Registration

The recipient of a complaint should:

- not make excuses, nor accept or cast blame
- try to get a factual account of what occurred and whether ACBF or a third party was actually involved
- thank the complainant for their comments which will be noted and followed up
- have the comments logged in the Day Book together with the date they were first received and have the Chief Officer notified.

The Chief Officer will decide who should act as "Respondant" at any stage depending on the nature of the complaint and will notify the Chair of Trustees if and when appropriate.

Investigation

The Respondant will:

- attempt to verify what the complaint is and whether it is against ACBF or actions for which a member of staff is responsible

- Contact the complainant, if appropriate, to re-assure them that the complaint is being pursued and that they will be kept advised of the outcome
- Ask if the complainant regards this as a serious matter on which they wish to meet with ACBF management or make a formal complaint in writing.

The outcome of this investigation shall be recorded and reported to the complainant for their explicit or default acceptance.

If the complainant requests a meeting

Where possible the complainant will be seen face-to-face in the presence of an acceptable witness. If a serious allegation is involved, the Chief Officer should decide whether the witness should be a Charity Trustee.

Informal resolution

If, after discussion with ACBF, the complainant wishes no formal action to be taken, a short written statement should be obtained to this effect.

Formal complaint

However, should the complainant wish to make a formal complaint, a detailed written statement will be taken and shall be signed by the complainant.

The matter will then be fully investigated and relevant evidence obtained. If the complaint is against a worker, a meeting shall be set up between the Worker, their supervisor, and a responsible trustee and the complainant shall be invited to attend if they wish. If appropriate the relevant member of staff will be suspended from work while further investigations take place.

After a formal investigation a review panel consisting if possible of two ACBF Trustees, who have not previously been involved, and one independent person shall convene to decide whether the complaint is substantiated or unsubstantiated.

The complainant and any Workers involved will be notified in writing of the review panel's decision.

Unsubstantiated Complaints

No further action is required.

Substantiated Complaints

A substantiated complaint against an employee will lead to disciplinary proceedings being instigated. The complainant and Employee will be informed of this in writing as soon as possible and within five working days of the complaint being substantiated. The disciplinary procedure is set out in a separate document.