

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Policy Statement

Louth Volunteer Centre welcomes all feedback, both positive and negative as it allows us to deliver a better service to the community. If an individual or organisation wishes to submit a formal complaint we will deal with it as fairly and quickly as possible.

This is the policy that we will follow if your complaint is about someone's conduct or behaviour. This is not the policy or process for our grievance or disciplinary procedures which deals with the relationship between team members and the Board of Directors of Louth Volunteer Centre.

You may wish to submit a formal complaint because you think that someone has behaved in a way that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive or intimidating. Or because someone has broken important rules or policies.

This policy is relevant if a volunteer or organisation wish to complain about the service provided by Louth Volunteer Centre. It is also relevant if people wish to make an external complaint, in other words a complaint made by a volunteer about an organisation or a complaint by an organisation about a referred volunteer.

It includes a step-by-step procedure outlining how the complaint will be dealt with by the Manager and Board. It provides time frames for each of the steps outlined above.

Values and Principles

- **You have the right to complain:** We take complaints seriously. You should not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage because of making a complaint.
- **Equality:** You should receive a proper response to your complaint, regardless of your age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, social status, sexual orientation or political persuasion.
- **Fairness:** Each complaint is treated equally, and sensitively. All complaints are handled with an open mind and investigated thoroughly. Complaints are dealt with promptly, in an attempt to resolve them as quickly as possible. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint should have a chance to contribute and respond to any investigation.
- **Safety and welfare take priority:** We will always give priority to concerns that affect safety and welfare. Issues affecting children will be treated very seriously.
- **Confidentiality:** We treat complaints as confidentially as possible. Sometimes we

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have to discuss complaints with other organisations. If we are worried about a risk to a person or to the public, we might need to pass on our concerns to the right authorities. If necessary, we will get advice from other organisations.

How to make a complaint

If you have a concern about the services of Louth Volunteer Centre, it is often best to start by having a conversation with someone at Louth Volunteer Centre. You can call into one of our offices (see our website or leaflet for details) or call our Drogheda office at 041 9809008. You can also make an appointment to have a face to face meeting with the Manager. They may be able to help to resolve your problem. If they cannot resolve your problem or you are still unsatisfied with the service you have received you are free to submit a formal complaint to the Manager.

If your original complaint needs to be looked into further, you will normally be asked to put your complaint in writing. The address for written complaints is at the bottom of this policy.

We do not respond to anonymous or abusive complaints

External Complaints

If you have an external complaint such as a complaint made by a volunteer about an organisation; or a complaint by an organisation about a referred volunteer, you should first check if the organisation has a procedure for making a complaint and follow that procedure. Louth Volunteer Centre provide a referral service and are not responsible for the actions of organisations or volunteers once that referral is completed.

Who to contact to make a complaint at Louth Volunteer Centre

Complaints will usually be handled by the Manager of Louth Volunteer Centre. You can submit a complaint to the manager via email at grainne@volunteerlouth.ie, by calling 041 9809008 and making an appointment for a face to face appointment or by post to:

Louth Volunteer, Centre, Bolton Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth

It would help if the following details were included in the complaint.

- Who was involved?
- What happened and when?
- What is your main concern?
- Have you done anything else to resolve this matter?
- What do you want to happen now?

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If a complaint is made regarding the Manager and/or you communicate to them that you feel your complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily by the Manager in the first instance, you may forward your complaint to the Chairperson of the Board for review by the Complaints Committee. This Complaints Committee is made up of at least two members of Louth Volunteer Centre's Board of Directors.

All complaints must be submitted within two months of the incident occurring.

What will we do to investigate?

We will provide an initial response to your written complaint within **five working days** for receiving it. If the matter is urgent, we will aim to respond more quickly.

If the matter has not been resolved to your satisfaction by the LVC Manager then your complaint will be referred to the Complaints Committee of the Louth Volunteer Centre Board within **five working days** of your written request for him/her to do so. The Complaints Committee will investigate your complaint within **30 working days** of the date when it was acknowledged. If it takes longer to investigate the issues raised in your complaint we will keep you informed as to the progress of the investigation every **two weeks**.

We will investigate your complaint fairly. This means that we will discuss the complaint with all of the relevant people. We will try to gather any information that may be relevant to handling your complaint. Sometimes we will ask to show copies of information from the investigation to other people to allow them to respond. This is because we believe in fairness and openness. We will not share information if we think that this will endanger someone's safety or welfare.

We reserve the right to seek advice from other appropriate organisations.

How will I know what is happening?

You will be given the details of a person who will be your point of contact at Louth Volunteer Centre. That person will make sure that you understand the process, and will help to answer any questions or concerns that you have.

You will be given an update on the progress of your complaint **every two weeks**. If there are delays in handling your complaint for any reason, we will keep you informed.

If your complaint leads to formal disciplinary action against someone, we will usually inform you about the outcome.

We will not tell you the outcome if that person is a child, or if we believe that telling you would create a risk to other people.

In this situation, we will still try to tell you about how you are affected by the action that we have taken.

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What are the possible outcomes or results of my complaint?

In many cases, we are able to resolve problems informally. This might include:

- A change in the way we work
- An explanation or apology
- An agreement to communicate or act differently in future

If an informal resolution is not suitable, then as outlined above a Complaints committee that includes members of the Board of Directors will look at the information about the case. We will ensure that this committee does not contain anyone directly involved with your complaint. They might decide to take the following action:

- Formal disciplinary action under the policies of Louth Volunteer Centre, if the complaint is about LVC Staff member.
- Changes in formal contracts or policies put in place by LVC
- A decision to refer the case to another organisation such as the Garda Síochána
- Full referral of complaint to relevant organisation re staff member concerned.
- Closure of your complaint without action

Other people you can speak to

Sometimes it can be useful to speak directly to someone outside LVC.

Here are some examples of when this might help:

- You need urgent advice about someone's safety or welfare
- You don't want to discuss the issue with someone at LVC
- Your complaint is very serious
- Your complaint involves other organisation(s)
- You need specialist advice

Monitoring & Review

This document will be reviewed by the LVC Board of Management every three years, or sooner if required.