

07 LVC Complaints Policy and Procedures  
Prepared By: John Cotterell  
Approved By: Tony Mullins and Ide Lenihan

## Complaints Policy and Procedures

Louth Volunteer Centre welcomes all feedback, both positive and negative as it allows us to deliver a better service to the community.

This is the policy that we will follow if your complaint is about someone's conduct or behaviour.

This could be because you think that someone has behaved in a way that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive or intimidating.

It could be because someone has broken important rules or policies.

This policy is relevant if people wish to make an external complaint i.e. a complaint made by a volunteer about an organisation or a complaint by an organisation about a referred volunteer. It is also relevant if a complaint is by a volunteer or organisation about the service provided by LVC.

It includes a step-by-step procedure outlining how the complaint will be dealt with i.e. 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, religion, nationality, social status, sexual orientation or political persuasion.
- **Fairness:** We believe that complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. 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 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 complaint about the services of Louth Volunteer Centre, it is often best

07 LVC Complaints Policy and Procedures  
Prepared By: John Cotterell  
Approved By: Tony Mullins and Ide Lenihan

to start by having a conversation with someone at LVC. There are some suggestions below about who to speak to. They may be able to help to resolve your problem. You could also make a written complaint. The address for written complaints is at the bottom of this policy.

If your complaint needs to be looked into further, you will normally be asked to put your complaint in writing.

We accept anonymous complaints, but it is often very difficult to investigate these properly. It is easier for us to handle your complaint if you provide as much detail as possible.

If you have an external complaint i.e. a complaint made by a volunteer about an organisation or a complaint by an organisation about a referred volunteer it is usually best if you first check if the organisation has a procedure for making a complaint and to follow that procedure. If the complaint is about someone in the organisation often the first step is to speak to your line manager or team leader to see if the matter can be resolved between you.

If the complaint is about your team leader/line manager in the organisation and you do not wish to discuss the issue with them and/or feel your complaint has not been addressed through the organisation's own complaint procedures then you can contact Louth Volunteer Centre and we would be happy to assist you in whatever way we can.

### **Who to contact to make a complaint at Louth Volunteer Centre**

Complaints will usually be handled by the Manager of Louth Volunteer Centre.

If a complaint is made regarding the Manager and/or you communicate to him/her that you feel your complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily by him/her in the first instance, the Manager will then 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 the Louth Volunteer Centre Board of Directors.

The address for written complaints has been included at the bottom of this policy.

### **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 5 working days of your written request for him/her to do so.

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

07 LVC Complaints Policy and Procedures  
Prepared By: John Cotterell  
Approved By: Tony Mullins and Ide Lenihan

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.

### **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 a Complaints committee that includes members of the Board of Directors will look at the information about the case. We will try to make sure 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 Siochana
- 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

07 LVC Complaints Policy and Procedures  
Prepared By: John Cotterell  
Approved By: Tony Mullins and Ide Lenihan

- Your complaint involves other organisation(s)
- You need specialist advice

You can make a complaint by phone at 041 980 9008 or by making a face-to-face appointment to see the Manager of Louth Volunteer Centre. All written complaints should be emailed to [john@volunteerlouth.ie](mailto:john@volunteerlouth.ie) or posted to:

The Manager  
Louth Volunteer Centre  
Old Motor Tax Office,  
Bolton Street  
Drogheda,  
Co. Louth