

Policy Title:	Complaints & Suggestions Policy and Procedure
Policy No.:	3.1.1
Effective Date:	November 2011
Review Number:	4
Standard	Equalities Legislation Valuing Diversity Policy Anti-Discriminatory Practice

Principles

Independent Advocacy North East (IANE) welcomes feedback on any aspect of its services and practices from anyone who has contact with the organisation. Such feedback may include suggestions or complaints. The agency seeks such feedback as part of its commitment to maintain quality services. The following procedures will enable feedback to be dealt with fairly, clearly, speedily and confidentially.

Feedback is invited from any individual or agency who has come into contact with any service provided by IANE. If an individual is unable to act for him/herself then it is acceptable for someone to act on their behalf.

IANE will ensure that those who have dealings with it are informed of this policy. Leaflets explaining this will be displayed openly and provided freely to the relevant individuals and agencies, including IANE's own staff, volunteers and trustees.

Procedures

Suggestions

Suggestions can be made verbally or in writing to any trustee, volunteer or member of staff of IANE.

Any suggestions will be passed on to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as soon as possible, who will acknowledge them promptly. The CEO will respond to suggestions after consideration and consultation with the appropriate people. All suggestions will be recorded for monitoring purposes.

Complaints

IANE always seeks to resolve complaints informally where possible and would expect that any complaint would normally be made within 6 months of the complainant being aware of the problem. To this end, complaints concerning any individual volunteer, member of staff or trustee should be discussed informally with that person, if the complainant feels able to do so. If the complaint concerns a volunteer advocate then the complainant should discuss the complaint with the CEO who will try to resolve it informally. If however the complaint concerns a the CEO then the complainant should contact the Chairperson of IANE.

If the nature of the complaint concerns the agency as a whole it should, initially, be discussed informally with the CEO.

Where dissatisfaction remains, or if the complainant does not wish to meet with the CEO informally, s/he will be advised to lodge a formal written complaint. Formal complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee will be informed immediately of the presence of the complaint. S/he will in turn notify the Executive Committee of the situation. Investigation by the CEO must be full and facts gathered as quickly as possible. A reply to the complainant must be made within 4 weeks, unless investigation takes longer, in which case s/he should be kept updated with regular progress reports.

Where any meetings are necessary with the complainant they will be advised that they may bring along a friend or other appropriate person (eg union representative) as support. Where the person

would like support but has no-one to assist them this charity will try to arrange support for them from an independent body (eg another voluntary organisation).

The CEO must be satisfied that all relevant facts have been gathered and then report the outcome to the Chairperson. A letter approved by the Chairperson summarising the outcome of the investigation and detailing any action taken will be sent to the complainant.

If the complainant is still not satisfied after completing this procedure, or they wish to complain about the CEO and feel unable to approach him/her directly, they should take their complaint to the Chairperson. The Chairperson will in turn consult with the Executive Committee. If after making a formal complaint to the Chairperson the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, they will be made aware of their right to go to an independent body for advice on further action (e.g. the Citizens Advice Bureau).

If a complaint is received which seriously places in question the moral or physical safety of any person involved, IANE will take immediate appropriate action.