

# COMPLAINTS POLICY

## Human Rights Legal Project (HRLP)



Human Rights Legal Project (hereafter ‘**HRLP**’, ‘we’, ‘us’) is committed upholding our mission, core ethics and values at all times. If at any stage, an individual has concerns about the conduct of a colleague, board member, or partner, or the running of the organisation, they are whole-heartedly encouraged to come forward. In all cases, such concerns or complaints will be handled in a professional and confidential manner, that does not undermine working relationships, and protects the complainant. Towards that end, this complaint procedure is to provide a formal mechanism to address such issues and bring about a satisfactory resolution in a fair and prompt manner.

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### 1. **Intention of our policy**

The intention of our policy is as follows;

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at HRLP knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

### 2. **Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of HRLP.

### **3. Where Complaints Come From**

Complaints may come from any individual, volunteer or organisation who has a legitimate interest in HRLP, including the general public if something is perceived to be improper. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing. This policy does not cover complaints from representatives who should refer to HRLP's internal policy on such matters.

### **4. Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

### **5. Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board members of HRLP and the Safeguarding Officer.

### **6. Review**

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

### **7. Complaints Procedure of HRLP**

Written complaints may be sent to HRLP by e-mail at [hrlp.safeguarding@gmail.com](mailto:hrlp.safeguarding@gmail.com). Verbal complaints may be made in person to any of HRLP's representatives or board members.

### **8. Receiving Complaints**

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have, such as social media or the office complaint box. Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded thereafter.

The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to HRLP, e.g. donor, volunteer, client
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words

## **9. Resolving Complaints**

### **9.1 Stage One**

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the HRLP safeguarding officer within five business days.

On receiving the complaint, the safeguarding officer records it in the complaints logbook. If it has not already been resolved, they delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within five working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

## **9.2 Stage Two**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Board of Trustees. The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Board of Trustees may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

## **10. Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about a Chair or trustee should not also have the Chair and/or trustee involved as a person leading a Stage Two review.

## **11. Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.