



Complaints Procedure

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1. Introduction – Safer London Foundation’s approach to handling complaints

Safer London Foundation (Safer London) is committed to continually improving its services. Feedback, including complaints, ensures we can learn, develop and improve the services we offer. This document outlines the steps that will be followed when a service user, staff member or other relevant person wishes to make a complaint about any area of Safer London’s work.

The Safer London Complaints Procedure follows a three stage process:

- Stage 1: Informal Resolution
- Stage 2: Formal Investigation
- Stage 3: Review Panel

The main principals underlying Safer London’s Complaints Procedure are:

- All Safer London service users, staff and volunteers are treated with dignity and respect, are not afraid to make a complaint and have their concerns taken seriously.
- Complaints are resolved as close to the point of service delivery and as quickly and confidentially as possible.
- Any Child Protection/Safeguarding concerns are addressed using the Safeguarding Policy and are referred immediately to the relevant social services team or to the police where appropriate.
- All complaints will be recorded in writing and kept in line with Safer London’s Case Management and Data Protection procedures.

2. How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made to any Safer London staff member. Complaints can be made in writing, verbally or via email ideally addressed to the relevant Project Manager. Information for young people and a young person’s complaints form is available in Annex B of this procedure:

Safer London Foundation
Skyline House,
200 Union Street,
London
SE1 0LX

Phone: 020 7021 0301

Fax: 020 7021 0301

Email: info@saferlondonfoundation.org

3. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Stage one of this procedure aims to resolve disputes informally without resorting to formal investigation or legal proceedings. Managers dealing with complaints must always explore every option to resolve complaints by working with the complainant to agree an outcome which is satisfactory to them and to Safer London. A clear distinction will be made between Stage 1 Informal Resolution and a Stage 2 Formal Investigation.

3:1 Timescale

- Complaint received and passed to relevant Manager within **1 working day**
- Manager acknowledges complainant within **2 working days**
- Response offered aiming to resolve complaint within **10 working days**

3:2 Procedure

Any Safer London staff member may receive a complaint. All staff members should encourage the complaint to be made in writing. However, this is not a requirement and must not be used to discourage people from pursuing a complaint. If a complaint has been received, it must be passed to the relevant Project Manager within 1 working day.

The Manager shall consider whether the complaint should be escalated to Stage 2 (Formal Investigation) immediately if the severity of the complaint warrants this. In such cases, the Manager will refer the complaint to the Director of Projects and Partnerships who will make the decision.

If not escalated to Stage 2, the Manager responsible will try to resolve the complaint informally and as quickly as possible; this may include gathering additional information, talking to relevant people or a face to face meeting. A written response, including any action that has been taken, should be provided within 10 working days from receiving the complaint.

3:3 Advocacy and support

Safer London will make every effort to be sensitive to the complainant's background and individual circumstances, for example their gender, first language, sexuality and any disabilities they may have. In some cases it may be beneficial for the complainant to have additional support, especially in the case of a young person or child.

This support may be provided by a parent or guardian, or by an independent advocate. Information on support available will be provided to the complainant when the Manager responsible initially acknowledges the complaint (within 2 working days of the complaint being made).

4. Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Safer London's response to Stage 1, then the complaint can be progressed to a Stage 2 Formal Investigation. To do this the complainant must inform Safer London (preferably the manager responsible for Stage 1) within 14 days of receiving the Stage 1 outcome. The complainant will be encouraged to state their reasons for dissatisfaction in writing, this is not however a requirement and must not be used to discourage people from pursuing the complaint further.

4:1 Timescale

- Manager informed of dissatisfaction of Stage 1 complaint outcome within **14 working days**
- Complaint escalated to Stage 2 Formal Investigation within **2 working days**
- Formal Investigation carried out within **20 working days**
- Formal Investigation outcome communicated within **5 working days** of the end of investigation.

4:2 Procedure

The Manager taking responsibility will escalate the complaint within two working days to the Director of Projects and Partnerships who will decide whether a formal investigation will be undertaken. The decision will be communicated to the complainant within a further two working days.

The Director of Projects and Partnerships will complete a formal investigation within 20 working days of the decision to proceed to Stage 2. If, in exceptional circumstances, this timescale cannot be met, the Director of Projects and Partnerships will provide an update to the complainant within 20 working days and agree a revised timescale. The formal investigation will include at least one face to face meeting with the complainant and will require information gathering and potentially interviews with other relevant people.

An Independent Person may also be engaged to provide other professional/technical advice to better understand the issues that have been raised.

The outcome of the formal investigation will be communicated to the complainant within five working days of the conclusion of the investigation. The outcome will be documented in a formal investigation report which will include the details of findings and conclusions with recommendations and actions being taken.

4:3 Advocacy and support

Safer London Foundation will make every effort to be sensitive to the complainant's background and individual circumstances, for example their gender, first language, sexuality and any disabilities they may have. In some cases it may be beneficial for the complainant to have additional support, especially in the case of a young person or child.

This support may be provided by a parent or guardian, or by an independent advocate. Information on support available will be provided to the complainant when the Manager responsible initially acknowledges the complaint (within 2 working days of the complaint being made).

5. Stage 3 – Review Panel

Where Stage 2 of the complaints procedure has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, they will be eligible to request further consideration of the complaint by a Review Panel. It is not possible for a complaint to be progressed to Stage 3 Review Panel unless it has been fully considered at Stage 2 (including providing the report).

5:1 Timescale

- Complainant informs the Director of Projects and Partnerships of dissatisfaction of Stage 2 outcome within **14 working days**
- Acknowledgment of request for Review Panel sent to complainant within **2 working days**
- Review Panel must be held within **30 working days** of a request for a review.
- Complainant notified of panel date and location at least **10 working days** before the panel meets.
- Final report produced within **5 working days**

5:2 Procedure

The Director of Projects and Partnerships will be responsible for setting up the Review Panel. The panel will be made up of three people – two will be from the Safer London's Senior Management Team (SMT) and the third person will be an independent person who will be responsible for chairing the panel hearing.

The Director of Projects and Partnerships will inform the complainant of the panel details, including time, date and location at least 10 working days before the panel is due to meet. The complainant will be asked to attend the panel including any one providing additional support to the complainant such as a parent/guardian and/or advocate. The complainant has the right not to attend the panel if they wish.

The panel will invite all those involved in the Stage 2 Formal Investigation to participate in the panel hearing as relevant to their roles.

The Chair will commence the panel hearing by explaining its purpose and the need for confidentiality. The panel will read all written information and listen to all points of view involved in the complaint. The purpose of the panel hearing is to understand each party's opinion of the complaint rather than an opportunity to cross-examine attendees.

Safer London will do all it can to conduct the panel as informally as possible, but in a professional manner and in an atmosphere that is accommodating to all attendees.

Once all information has been heard the panel will deliberate the findings, a final report of findings, outcomes and actions will be produced within 5 working days. The report and final outcome will be communicated to the complainant by a relevant Safer London SMT member.

5:3 Advocacy and support

Safer London will make every effort to be sensitive to the complainant's background and individual circumstances, for example their gender, first language, sexuality and any disabilities they may have. In some cases it may be beneficial for the complainant to have additional support, especially in the case of a young person or child.

This support may be provided by a parent or guardian, or by an independent advocate. Information on support available will be provided to the complainant when the Manager responsible initially acknowledges the complaint (within 2 working days of the complaint being made).

6. Charity Commission

Once the Safer London complaints procedure has been exhausted and if the complainant remains dissatisfied, then they have the right to complain to the Charity Commission following the link below.

[http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/About us/Complaining/Complaint_about_a_charity_index.aspx](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/About_us/Complaining/Complaint_about_a_charity_index.aspx)

7. Withdrawing a complaint

A complaint may be withdrawn verbally or in writing at any time by the complainant. Safer London will write to the complainant to confirm the withdrawal of the complaint. In some circumstances Safer London may continue to investigate the complaint through an internal review and then use any relevant information gained to improve its services.

8. Learning from Complaints – Recommendations and review

Safer London is committed to learning from complaints and improving its services as the result of any feedback it receives. The Safer London SMT will be responsible for deciding on the appropriate way to feedback outcomes and recommendations to staff, taking into account confidentiality where necessary.

The SMT will take responsibility for reviewing complaints on a quarterly basis during SMT meetings. This will include ensuring actions and recommendations that have resulted from any complaints have been appropriately carried out. An annual complaints report will be produced to ensure further learning and good practice.

9. Links with other Safer London Procedures

9:1 Grievance and disciplinary procedures

Complaints procedures will be kept separate from grievance procedures, (which concern staff issues e.g. conditions of service) and disciplinary procedures (which apply to the actions of staff in relation to failures to comply with job descriptions).

Where complaints contain an element of grievance or discipline, Safer London will keep the complainant and its staff informed about progress in handling both the complaints and the disciplinary or grievance elements as appropriate having regard to normal staff confidentiality.

9:2 Record Management and Data Protection

Management and handling of all information relating to a complaint, reports and panel notes will adhere to Safer London's Case Management and Data Protection procedures.

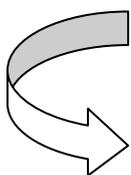
9:3 Safeguarding

Where consideration of a complaint leads to concerns about the welfare of a child or young person, this should be referred immediately to a Safer London Safeguarding lead. The handling of any associated complaint can be suspended if necessary.

Annex 1: Quick Reference Summary

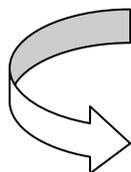
Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- Complaint received and passed to relevant Project Manager within 1 working day.
- Manager acknowledges complaint within a maximum of 2 working days and informs complainant of process and additional support available.
- Manager will try to resolve complaint informally and as quickly as possible.
- Manager will provide a response to complainant within 10 working days from receipt of complaint; this will include a written summary of conclusions and actions.



Stage 2: Formal Investigation

- Complainant informs Project Manager of dissatisfaction of Stage 1 complaint outcome within 14 working days
- Complaint escalated to Stage 2 Formal Investigation within 2 working days, Director of Projects and Partnerships takes responsibility of complaint.
- Formal Investigation carried out by Director of Projects and Partnerships within 20 working days
- Formal Investigation report produced including investigation findings, conclusions and actions taken.
- Formal Investigation outcome communicated to complainant (including written report) within 5 working days of the end of investigation.



Stage 3: Review Panel

- Complainant informs the Director of Projects and Partnerships of dissatisfaction of Stage 2 outcome within 14 working days of receiving the outcome.
- Acknowledgment of request for Review Panel sent to complainant within 2 working days
- Review Panel formed of 3 people, 2 Safer London SMT members and 1 independent person. The independent panel member will chair the panel
- Review Panel will be held within 30 working days of a request for a review.
- Complainant notified of panel date and location at least 10 working days before the panel meets.
- Final report produced with final decision within 5 working days