

# **THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK**

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Why Have a Complaints Policy and Procedure?**

Both compliments and complaints help strengthen an organisation's work. As the Charity Commission report 'Cause for Complaint' says in regard to the latter: 'an effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships with the people on whom the charity depends.'

Handling complaints well:

- demonstrates our commitment to our member bodies and other stakeholders;
- demonstrates our commitment to providing the best possible service;
- helps us to find out about things that have gone wrong so we can fix them; and
- helps us to prevent things going wrong again in future.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint where that is well founded.

### **IFN's Complaints Policy**

IFN's policy is:

- 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 IFN 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; and
- to gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

### **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is any written expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of IFN which is identified by the sender as a complaint.

Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in IFN, such as service users, donors, funding organisations or member bodies.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, which are covered in IFN's Grievance Policy, or from Trustees.

Note: Where a complaint may be linked to a safeguarding issue, the Safeguarding Children or Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy shall apply instead of this policy, and the complainant should be referred to the designated Safeguarding Officer.

### **Confidentiality**

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

### **Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy rests with the Board, and responsibility for its implementation lies with the Executive Director.

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **Making a complaint**

IFN seeks to be responsive to suggestions and concerns. However, if a person or organisation wishes to make a complaint, the following is the procedure.

Complaints must be made in writing and sent to Inter Faith Network for the UK, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH or by e-mail to [complaints@interfaith.org.uk](mailto:complaints@interfaith.org.uk). They should be marked 'Confidential'.

If an approach is made by phone or in person to any staff member or trustee, the complainant will be asked to put their complaint in writing and will be given the necessary contact details. Complaints will not be taken in person or over the telephone or other non-written media and if raised in that way will not be addressed by IFN.

Full contact details must be provided; anonymous complaints will not be addressed.

Where complaints come from an organisation, the complaint should indicate that the person making the complaint is authorised to do so on behalf of their organisation.

Complaints should be received within one month after the cause for complaint has arisen.

### **Resolving complaints**

Receipt of the written complaint will be acknowledged within two working days and normally be passed to IFN's Executive Director within three working days.

On receiving the complaint, the Executive Director will delegate it to an appropriate person for investigation and to take appropriate action.

A complaint will normally be acknowledged by the person investigating the complaint within one working week of receipt. The acknowledgement will indicate who is dealing with the complaint and when it is anticipated that the complainant can expect a response or an update. A copy of this complaints procedure will be attached.

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about and that may be the first person to whom the complaint is passed for response. They may be able to resolve it swiftly and will aim to do so if possible and appropriate.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will normally be informed and given an opportunity to respond.

The aim is that a complainant receives a definitive reply within four working weeks. If this is not practicable because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will normally be sent with an indication of when a full reply is anticipated.

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

If the complaint is against the Executive Director, it will be passed to the Co-Chairs of IFN's Board, who will arrange for a Trustee to investigate it. If a complaint is against one/ both Co-Chairs, it will be passed to the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Subcommittee, who will arrange for a Trustee to investigate it. If a complaint is about the Chair of the FGPS or any Trustee other than the Co-Chairs, the Co-Chairs will arrange for another Trustee to investigate it.

#### *Further process if required*

If the complainant considers that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at the initial stage (Stage One), they can request that the complaint is reviewed. The review will be undertaken by the Executive Director unless the Executive Director has carried out Stage One, or where the complaint is against the Executive Director, in which case arrangements for the carrying out of Stage Two will be made by the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Subcommittee or another Trustee who has not been involved at Stage One.

The request for Stage Two review should be acknowledged within one working week of receiving it and should say when it is anticipated that the complainant can expect a reply.

The person carrying out Stage Two will investigate the facts of the case, which may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. As at Stage One, in the event of a complaint against the Executive Director, this will be done by the Co-Chairs of the Board. If a complaint is against one/ both Co-Chairs, it will be passed to the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Subcommittee, who will arrange for a Trustee to investigate it. If a complaint is about the Chair of the FGPS or any other Trustee

other than the Co-Chairs, the Co-Chairs will arrange for another Trustee to investigate it. Where a complaint concerns the Board as a whole, a response shall be made by it as a whole.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening where possible.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four working weeks. 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 it is anticipated that 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.

### Monitoring and learning from complaints

Complaints are reviewed in the first instance by the Executive Director. A note of types of complaint will be provided to the Finance and General Purposes Subcommittee annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

IFN will retain a record of all complaints for three years – whether resolved formally or informally, and whether or not substantiated. Anonymised detail of types of complaints may be kept for a longer period in order to monitor any patterns in the reporting of complaints.

### **Matters handled by other bodies**

Complaints can be made to the Charity Commission at any time, although IFN will always prefer to have an opportunity to resolve the matter first. Information about the kinds of complaints the Charity Commission will consider can be found on their website at: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

If the complaint is about IFN's fundraising activities and IFN is unable to resolve it to the complainant's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the Fundraising Regulator, the self-regulator for fundraising in the UK. See <http://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk> Please note that the Fundraising Regulator only considers complaints received within 3 months of the original incident.

This policy does not cover complaints where the subject matter is being investigated by another body or where IFN considers that the matter should instead be referred to another body (in which case the complainant will be told).

### **Unreasonable complainant behaviour**

The Board or Trustees or whomever it designates to consider a complaint may at any time determine that a complainant is behaving unacceptably or is unreasonably persistent such that the nature or frequency of the person's complaints become a serious hindrance to the organisation's work. In such circumstances, they may vary or disapply this policy in relation to a complaint, informing the complainant of this promptly.

### **Complaints that have already been addressed**

The Board of Trustees or whomever it designates to consider a complaint may at any time vary or disapply this policy in relation to a complaint if they consider it appropriate to do so because:

- (a) the complaint has already been addressed by IFN in the view of the Board; or
- (b) the subject matter of the complaint is closely linked with a complaint that has already been addressed by IFN and it would be reasonable not to consider the new complaint under this policy.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as required.

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