

Complaints Procedure



A complaint is a statement of dissatisfaction by someone who has used the ICE Benevolent Fund service. Complaints can be raised in the form of a letter, fax, email or phone call.

If the complaint is made to a 3rd party by mistake (e.g the ICE), then it needs to be passed immediately to the Ben Fund office for action.

Preliminary Stage: Informal Resolution

The staff member responsible for the service or the individual that has prompted the complaint should first consider whether some basic fence-mending could remedy the situation. This might involve a simple call to the individual or a straightforward explanation and apology if it is about an individual's behaviour. This could avoid having to embark on what can be a time-consuming procedure for both the ICE Benevolent Fund and the individual concerned.

If the complaint is in connection with a third party partner, then attempts should be made at an early stage to get all parties together on a Teams call or similar so that the complaint can be heard, discussed and reviewed with everyone involved. This prevents a "they said, you said" situation and stops Ben Fund staff acting as a "go between". Attention needs to be given to any consent forms that the complainant has signed prior to accepting a partner service; sometimes referring the complainant back to this can be helpful in ameliorating a situation.

Stage One: Review by CEO

If informal resolution is not possible, the CEO must conduct a full investigation into the complaint. The investigation can be delegated, but not to anyone implicated or involved in the issue. The response to the individual must be from the CEO. Complaints which relate directly to the CEO must be referred straight to the next stage of the process and bypass stage one.

The complaint must be acknowledged – by letter or email – within five working days of receipt, and the full response must be sent to the individual within 20 working days.

Throughout the process, if any delay is likely to the standard timeframe (because of a complex complaint or key people are on holiday or sick leave), the individual must be informed in writing and given an indication of when they should expect a response.

Once the investigation is complete, a letter should be sent detailing its findings to the individual by post or email.

The full response must contain sufficient information to assure the individual that their complaint has been taken seriously and should address all the issues raised in the original complaint. If the complaint is upheld, the individual must receive a full apology for their experience as well as details, as far as possible, of what is being done to prevent a



recurrence. The review must conclude with details of the next stage in the process, i.e. Stage Two – review by the ICE Benevolent Fund Chairperson.

Stage Two: Review Under Direction of ICE Benevolent Fund Chairperson

If the individual remains dissatisfied, they should be advised that they can write to the ICE Benevolent Fund Chairperson, being clear about the issues which they feel remain unaddressed or where they are not satisfied with the response. The Chairperson may feel that they wish to involve the Trustee Board at this stage and they may wish to appoint an independent HR consultant to investigate. Complaints which relate directly to the ICE Benevolent Fund CEO must be referred straight to this stage of the process, i.e. bypass Stage One

The same timeframes apply, i.e. acknowledgment within five working days, response in 20, although any delay in timing due to the Chairperson consulting with other Trustees or an independent expert must be made clear.

If, for any reason, the Chairperson is unable to carry out the review within the set timeframes due to, say, work commitments, annual leave, a conflict of interest; the investigation must be delegated to a group of three other elected Trustees; they may also wish to appoint an independent HR consultant.

The review must look at:

- Did the CEO follow the organisational procedure?
- Have all points of the complaint been fairly addressed?
- Was the investigation carried out in a fair and transparent fashion?
- Is there a need for continued or additional advice?
- Have adequate steps been taken to prevent recurrence?

The Chairperson or independent consultant may contact the individual during this investigation for further information.

The review will address only whether the investigation thus far has been conducted in line with stated procedures and whether it has been handled fairly. The Chairperson will not normally comment on the substance of the complaint, unless it is a direct complaint against the CEO.

Should the Chairperson find that the stated procedure was not followed or that the matter has not been handled fairly, they will specify why and may give directions for a re-investigation.

The full report of the Chairperson will be sent to the individual and the CEO of the ICE Benevolent Fund. The decision of the Chairperson (and Trustee Board, if consulted) is final.