



# Groundswell Complaints Procedure

## Introduction

Groundswell tries hard to make sure that everyone volunteering for us or using our advocacy service gets a good service that lives up to what we say we will do in all our policies and procedures. Occasionally, however, situations may arise when people think we are not performing as we say we do and feel they have a legitimate complaint.

This policy will tell you what you need to do if you want to complain about Groundswell or anyone who works for Groundswell or is associated with us. If you find this policy difficult you can ask the managers of Groundswell to take you through it.

Although complaints procedures have to work to rules we have tried to make this as straightforward as possible so that everyone can use it if they feel the need.

- Anyone who makes a complaint about Groundswell can be represented by whomever they choose.
- If you feel you wish to make a complaint but feel that you need support Groundswell will try to arrange for you to have the support of an advocate who does not work for Groundswell.
- All complaints are treated confidentially. This means that we will only involve the people who are directly involved in your complaint.
- Initially we will try to sort out problems in an informal way. We will only move onto a more formal approach if we cannot solve your concerns informally.
- If you want to know more about this policy or just want to talk about it you should contact Kate Bowgett at Groundswell.

## Who can make a complaint?

- A volunteer
- A person being supported by a Peer Advocate
- A person who represents agencies working with Groundswell



- A person who is supporting (key working or other) a person who is being supported by a Peer Advocate or a volunteer

## **Who can you make a complaint about?**

You can make a complaint about:

- A Peer Advocate
- A Director or Manager
- Anyone else working for Groundswell
- Others directly associated with and representing Groundswell

## **What you can make a complaint about?**

Anything where you feel:

- we have got it wrong
- we have given you a poor service
- we have not stuck to our policies or procedures

## **How to make a complaint**

You can let us know that you have an issue with Groundswell:

- In writing – a letter, email
- Verbally – over the phone or in person

A written record is kept at Groundswell about all complaints made. So even if you tell us verbally we will make a note of the details of the conversation. Once the formal procedure has been started a full written record will be kept.

At this stage we will try to ascertain if you need help in making the complaint and what we can do to help you in this respect. All complaints should go to the Director responsible for that department or project. If you are complaining about a Director or Senior Manager you should contact the Chief Executive.



## The procedure

**Stage 1 - Informal:** The relevant Director or Manager will talk or write to you about the complaint and see if there is a simple solution that meets your needs without a formal investigation taking place. This may involve the Director or Manager talking to other people to gather information. In normal circumstances this process should take less than 14 days to complete. If you are not satisfied with the results of this stage you can go on to Stage 2. You may, if you wish, go straight to the formal stage (Stage 2) without using Stage 1.

**Stage 2 - Formal:** This stage is very much like Stage 1 but this time the Director or Manager will undertake an exhaustive formal investigation to ascertain all the facts. You will probably meet with the Director or Manager to ensure that we have all the details of the case. This process will usually take less than 28 days. If you are not satisfied with the results of this stage you can go on to Stage 3. You must have gone through Stage 2 in order to go to Stage 3.

**Stage 3 - Appeal Tribunal:** Here you will have your complaint formally considered by a panel made up of:

- A member of the Groundswell SMT not involved with the complaint
- A member of the Groundswell Board
- A representative from another voluntary sector group

The panel will meet at a location and time that best suits everyone concerned or via video call. Although, even at this stage, the meeting will be conducted informally, it is necessary to conduct the meeting within a formal structure.



## Finally

- You will not be discriminated against if you make a complaint about Groundswell.
- If you are using one e will not withdraw our service just because you make a complaint
- If by using this complaints procedure we are found to be in the wrong we will apologise and try our best to put things right for you and for other clients of our service.

