

## Making a complaint in SHEP

*If you have a grievance or complaint about any aspect of our service we would like to hear about it.*

### Our Policy

Persons with whom SHEP has dealings may at some time have cause to complain or express their dissatisfaction about a particular SHEP service (for example, our training, counselling or advocacy services) or an aspect of the Project. Groups or organisations who avail (or who wish to avail of our supports/services) may also have cause to complain.

SHEP is committed to continuously improving our standards and constructively handling any complaints. SHEP is also committed taking any reasonable action to ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future.

A central aspect of the work of SHEP involves facilitating people in achieving mutual respect, in listening with understanding and compassion, in building healthier and more loving and more just relationships, and in reaching constructive resolutions of problems. These same values underpin the approach and principles used in dealing with problems or difficulties arising with regard to any aspect of SHEP's work.

SHEP is committed to ensuring that sufficient time is given for issues to be worked through.

A separate (more detailed) policy has been developed for participants on our training programme who may have a grievance or cause to complain. This is entitled '**Grievance Procedures for Participants on SHEP Intensive Courses or Community Courses**' and it complements/supplements (rather than replaces) this generic, organisation-wide complaints procedure.

A further policy has been developed in relation to how we address difficulties which may arise (in SHEP Core Courses and Community Courses) between co-facilitators on such courses, or between facilitators on such courses and Project staff. This is entitled '**Problem Resolution Policy for SHEP Trainers and Tutors**'.

SHEP recognises that the principle of openness (informing those complained against) which this policy espouses may constitute an additional challenge for people who experience difficulty in speaking up for themselves.

Please note that SHEP supports the use of independent advocacy should you decide to access in relation to your grievance/complaint. Service users/ Course participants may at all stages in the procedure be advised or accompanied by another person(s) of your choice, or may elect to have this person or these persons present the complaint on their behalf.

### General Principles of Confidentiality

The rights, privacy and dignity of the person involved in a complaint will be respected at all times.

In order to investigate the complaint fully it may be necessary to reveal the identity of the complainant and/or details of the complaint to other parties within SHEP.

Confidentiality may not be maintained in the following situations:

- I. If it becomes clear that the complainant is at serious risk of harming themselves or another person
- II. If the complaint includes material indicating that individuals may be at serious risk of harming themselves or another person.
- III. In the context of criminal behaviour where disclosures may be required for legal reasons, including where there may be child protection concerns.

## The Grievance/Complaint Procedure

### Informal Complaint Resolution

#### Stage 1

Most grievances or complaints can be resolved at an early stage by discussing the matter informally.

You should raise your complaint with the appropriate Trainer, Tutor, Advocate, Counsellor or member of staff (closest to the incident) who will make every effort to provide a corrective/preventative solution or an explanation of what has happened. In most cases a personal response to the complainant, by the person concerned may be adequate. But if appropriate, or where requested, a written response (by e-mail or letter) may be provided.

#### Stage 2

If you feel unable to discuss the matter with the person involved (or have done so but still feel dissatisfied) you can ask to speak to any Senior Staff member (a Senior Training & Development Officer or Project Coordinator) or the Project Director.

The Senior Staff member or the Project Director will meet with you. Your concern will be listened to and s(he) will do what is possible to address your concern. If appropriate, other staff members may also be in attendance if it is mutually agreed.

### Formal Complaint Process

If having followed the informal route you believe that your concerns have not been properly addressed, or where the complaint is particularly serious or confidential, then a **formal complaint** may be made by you.

#### Stage 1

To raise a formal complaint the Project's '**Formal Complaint Form**' should be completed, providing as much detail as is relevant including any dates, times and witnesses to any act or incident. A copy of this Formal Complaint Form is available from the Project and is on the SHEP Website.

Your complaint should be addressed to the Relevant Training & Development Officer or the relevant Project Coordinator. You will receive a written reply to your complaint within four working weeks.

If you are making a formal complaint about a staff member the complaint form should be submitted to the Project Director.

Where the complaint is about the Project Director the complaint should be addressed to the Chairperson of the Human Resources Sub-Committee.

#### Stage 2: Appealing the Outcome of a Formal Complaint

If you feel that your complaint has not been adequately addressed by the staff member or if you are not satisfied with the formal decision of the staff member you can appeal the decision (or request a new review) to the Project Director. This is done by submitting an updated Formal Complaint Form.

Receipt of this submission will be acknowledged within 7 days.

If you are appealing the formal decision of the Project Director you should address the appeal to the Chairperson of the Human Resources Sub-committee. The Project Director will also be asked to submit his/her own response. The Chairperson, in consultation with other SHEP personnel, will address your concerns fully and provide a written response about the outcome of the review within four working weeks.

## FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM

### Informal Complaint Resolution

Most grievances or complaints can be resolved informally, and as close to the origin of the complaint as possible. Complaints should be raised with the appropriate SHEP personnel or member of staff who will make every effort to provide a corrective/preventative solution or an explanation of what has happened. In most cases a personal response to the complaint, by staff, may be adequate. But if appropriate, or where requested, a written response (by e-mail or letter) may be provided.

### Formal Complaint Process

If, having followed the informal route, the complainant believes that his/her concerns have not been properly addressed or where the complaint is particularly serious or confidential then a formal complaint may be made. To raise a formal complaint the Project's formal complaint form should be completed, providing as much detail as is relevant including any dates, times and witnesses to any act or incident.

YOUR DETAILS -	PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY
NAME:	
CONTACT ADDRESS:	
CONTACT PHONE:	
CONTACT E-MAIL:	

**DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT:**

Please describe the nature of your complaint. Please explain who (if anyone) was involved.  
(Attach separate sheets if necessary).

**Who did you approach to resolve your complaint informally?**

*Include the staff member's name and date raised:*

*What action was taken to resolve your complaint:*

**How do you propose the complaint could be resolved to your satisfaction?**

<p><b>Return this form, <u>marked confidential</u> to:</b></p>	<p><b>What happens next:</b></p>
<p>(The relevant staff member)                  The Social and Health Education Project                  Village Centre,                  Ballincollig,                  Co. Cork.</p> <p><i>Or if appealing a decision of staff member or in the case of a complaint against a staff member:</i>                  The Director,                  The Social and Health Education Project,                  Village Centre,                  Ballincollig,                  Co. Cork.</p> <p><i>Or if appealing a decision of Project Director or in the case of a complaint against the Project Director:</i>                  The Chairperson of the SHEP Human Resources Sub-Committee,                  The Social and Health Education Project,                  Village Chambers,                  Ballincollig,                  Co. Cork.</p>	<p>You should receive a formal acknowledgment of your complaint within the next 7 working days.</p> <p>You will then normally receive a substantive response within 4 weeks.</p>

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

DATE RECEIVED:		ACKNOWLEDGED:	
1 <sup>ST</sup> Action Notes:		2 <sup>ND</sup> Action Notes	

*A copy of this form and any attachments will be provided to the person complained about so that they are given a chance to make comments should they wish to do so.*