

## 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.*

*SHEP supports the use of independent advocacy. Service-users/course participants may at all stages in this procedure be advised or accompanied by another person(s) of your choice or may elect to have this person (or these persons) to support or present the complaint on your behalf.*

### Our Policy

People who engage with SHEP's services may have cause to complain or express their dissatisfaction about (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 to taking reasonable action to ensure that complaint outcomes improve our services and, as far as possible, prevent reasonable grounds for complaint arising in the future for people who engage with our organisation and services.

A central aspect of SHEP's work involves facilitating people in achieving mutual respect, in listening with understanding and compassion, in building healthier, more loving and more just relationships, and in reaching resolution through constructive problem-solving processes. These values also underpin the approach and principles that underpin procedure handling complaints about SHEP's services. Please note also that SHEP is committed to ensuring that sufficient time is given for issues to be worked through.

SHEP adheres to that the principles of fair procedure. This means allowing a person to have their case heard and informing people about any complaint made against them as individuals. While we understand that this may be a challenge for people who find it difficult to speaking up for themselves, it important to ensure fair treatment of all parties relevant to a complaint. To this end, we will endeavour to reasonably support any person to have their voice heard through the process.

SHEP is also committed to ensuring that sufficient time is given for issues to be worked through<sup>1</sup>.

### General Principles of Confidentiality

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

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

---

<sup>1</sup> 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**'.

- 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 safeguarding of vulnerable adults or child protection concerns.

#### Reasonable Accommodations

To ensure full and equal access to our complaints procedure, SHEP is committed to offering reasonable accommodations to complainants, to both remove barriers and fully support people to equally engage with the process.

Complainants will be advised of this when they make initial contact to raise their complaint.

## 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. We are confident that in most cases a personal verbal response to the complainant, by the person the complaint is made against, should be adequate. But if appropriate, or where requested, a written response (by e-mail or letter) will be provided.

#### Stage 2

If you feel unable to discuss the matter with the person involved (or have done so but still feel dissatisfied with their verbal response) 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.

We will aim to address complaints through the information process as soon as possible or within 21 days. If this is not possible due to external factors, the complainant will be informed and a new time frame for resolution will be 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.

To maintain objectivity in this process, if you are making a formal complaint about a staff member the complaint form should be submitted to the Project Director.

To maintain objectivity in this process, if 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 or if you are not satisfied with outcome of Stage 1, 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. If this is not possible due to external factors, the complainant will be informed and a new time frame for resolution will be agreed.

**An additional appeal mechanism for instances where a formal investigation has failed to resolve a complaint**

In instances where a formal investigation has failed to resolve a complaint, you may seek an independent review of our complaint. For example, you might seek the involvement of the HSE (which is a core funder of SHEP) or the Ombudsman/Ombudsman for Children.

**Contact Details for HSE**

1890-424-555

Email: [yoursay@hse.ie](mailto:yoursay@hse.ie)

## 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:	

<p><b>DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT:</b></p> <p>Please describe the nature of your complaint. Please explain who (if anyone) was involved. (Attach separate sheets if necessary).</p>
<div></div>

**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?**

SHEP Complaints Policy & Complaint Form (March 2025)

<b>Return this form, <u>marked confidential</u> to:</b>	<b>What happens next:</b>
<p>(The relevant staff member) The Social and Health Education Project</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, Social and Health Education Project, Ardfoyle Crescent, Ballintemple, 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, Social and Health Education Project, Ardfoyle Crescent, Ballintemple, 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.

**Commented [AM1]:** It would be useful to include how long this form will be retained for and why, e.g., this form will be retained until an internal audit is completed or two years (whichever occurs first).

The purpose of including the retention is that SHEP won't have to respond unnecessarily to Personal Data Requests because you've clearly specified the expiry date of the form.

It would also be useful to provide a link to SHEP's Privacy Statement/Notice which should be on the website.

Example: If you would like to know how we protect your personal data, please see our Privacy Statement.