



Policy: Complaints Policy and Procedure

Ref: P04 – G1.1

1. Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 We aim to provide the users of our service with the best possible service. We positively welcome suggestions on how we can improve our service.
- 1.2 Usually, a conversation with the staff or volunteer involved should be enough to resolve most problems when they arise. However, we recognise that there may be occasions when users of our services feel that the quality or level of service provided falls short of what they could reasonably expect. We want to know about these occasions so that we can make good the problem and plan to avoid its repetition. Hearing about complaints helps us improve our service.
- 1.3 We keep a copy of the complaints procedure on our website at www.z2k.org. We will provide assistance, where we can, for an individual with special requirements to have access to our complaints procedure.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. This policy sets out the procedures we will follow when we receive a complaint from users of our service and any individuals or entities that are not employees or volunteers of Z2K. It does not address complaints made by volunteers, which will be dealt with through our volunteering policy, and staff which will be dealt with through our grievance and disciplinary procedures set out in the staff handbook.
- 2.2. This procedure is meant to provide a means to resolve a dispute between us users of our service and other external parties. Complaints are likely to be in one or more of the following areas:
 - dissatisfaction with our service, such as inadequate work, problems with casework, unacceptable delay or failure to deliver a service etc;
 - disputes n regarding policy, procedures or activities;
 - discourtesy or unhelpfulness on the part of staff/volunteer.

3. Complaints not made in good faith

- 3.1. We will assume all complaints are made in good faith, but we will take malicious or vexatious complaints, or those made on the basis of discrimination, very seriously. In order to protect staff and volunteers we will investigate all aspects of complaints thoroughly, which may expose any such inappropriate motives.

- 3.2. Where a manager, Chief Executive or Trustee considers the complaint to be deliberately repetitious, malicious or vexatious at any Stage of the complaint, we reserve the right to give a decision without a formal investigation.
- 3.3. If at any Stage a complainant becomes physically or verbally abusive, we reserve the right to close the complaint without a formal investigation

4. Addressing complaints

- 4.1. The staff member/volunteer, or the appropriate line manager, should be given the opportunity to resolve the matter through discussions with the complainant before a formal complaint is raised. If, however, they are not satisfied with the outcome of those discussions they can submit a formal complaint in writing in accordance with the process set out in this policy.

5. Time limit for formal complaints

- 5.1. A formal complaint must be made no later than three months after the incident/s occurred.

6. The procedure

- 6.1. A formal complaint should be made in writing using our complaint form, Ref P04.1_G1.1_Z2K Complaint Form, which can be obtained from our website <https://www.z2k.org/complaints>. A complainant can also contact the Office Manager, Tanya Sutton at tanyasutton@z2k.org or by telephone 02072590801 to request a form. We will provide assistance, where we can, for an individual with special requirements to complete the form. Complaints should be addressed to the Office Manager, Z2K, Fourth Floor, 79-80 Petty France, London SW1H 9EX or email it to tanyasutton@z2k.org. We will acknowledge receipt of complaints within 5 working days of receiving it by email/letter in accordance to the preference stated in the complaints form.

6.1.1. If the complaint is complex, we may extend the time limit of the complaint Stages. We will always confirm the new deadline to complete each Stage of the complaint.

6.1.2. If a complainant decides not to pursue or withdraws a complaint at any point, the case will be closed and the manager will communicate the decision to everyone involved.

6.2. Stage 1: Investigation by a Manager

6.2.1. We will take up to 5 working days to acknowledge receipt of the form by sending an acknowledgement letter which will include the deadline for the Stage 1 decision. The deadline is 20 working days from the date of the acknowledgement letter.

6.2.2. The complaint will be investigated by a member of Z2K's Senior Management Team, who will be assigned the case by the Chief Executive Officer.

6.2.3. The manager will gather evidence and investigate. This will include hearing written and/or oral evidence from the complainant and staff/volunteers involved, and referring to any case notes and documents related to the complaint.

- 6.2.4. The manager will confirm the final outcome of his/her investigation in writing (by letter or email as appropriate). This will state whether the complaint was upheld, partially upheld or not upheld and, where applicable, any remedies offered by Z2K (see paragraph 7 of this policy) and an explanation of how we intend to prevent a re-occurrence of the situation that led to the complaint. We will also inform complainants of any right of further redress, e.g. progression to the next Stage.
- 6.2.5. If the complaint is against the Chief Executive, it will be investigated by a manager appointed by a Trustee.
- 6.2.6. If complainants are unhappy with the outcome of the investigation at Stage 1, this may be appealed by writing to the Chief Executive to the address or email in 6.1. using the same complaints form mentioned in 6.1 and the complaint will proceed to Stage 2: Adjudication. Please refer to 6.3 of this policy.
- 6.2.7. If the complainant decides not to appeal the outcome, then the complaint is closed and progression past Stage 1 is not required.

6.3. Stage 2: Adjudication

- 6.3.1. Complainants need to submit a written request to appeal the Stage 1 decision using the same complaints form mentioned in 6.1. stating why they are unhappy with the Stage 1 outcome and whether there is any new evidence.
- 6.3.2. We will take up to 5 working days to acknowledge receipt of the form by sending an acknowledgement letter which will include the deadline for the Stage 2 decision. The deadline is 15 working days from the date of the acknowledgement letter.
- 6.3.3. Stage 2 will be reviewed by a manager who was not involved in the Stage 1 investigation. The manager will be appointed by the Chief Executive. If the complaint is made against the Chief Executive, the manager will be appointed by a Trustee.
- 6.3.4. The purpose of Stage 2 is to ensure, as far as it is practical, that the process of Stage 1 was appropriately followed and to consider any new evidence.
- 6.3.5. The adjudicating manager will review the evidence gathered in Stage 1, and to check that the Stage 1 complaint process was followed correctly. S/he will then determine whether s/he agrees on the fairness and reasonableness of the outcome. If s/he disagrees, then s/he will decide whether all or part of the complaint should go back to Stage 1 and/or 2.
- 6.3.6. The written response will be consistent with that described in paragraph 6.2.4.
- 6.3.7. If complainants are not happy with the outcome of Stage 2, they may appeal this following the process 6.2.6 to escalate to Stage 3: Appeal. Please refer to 6.4 of this policy.
- 6.3.8. If complainants decide not to appeal the outcome, then the complaint is closed and progression past Stage 2 is not required.

6.4. Stage 3: Appeal

- 6.4.1. Complainants need to submit a written request to appeal the Stage 2 decision using our complaints form mentioned in 6.1. stating why they are unhappy with the Stage 2 outcome.
- 6.4.2. We will take up to 5 working days to acknowledge receipt of the form by sending an acknowledgement letter which will include the deadline for the Stage 3 decision. The deadline is 25 working days from the date of the acknowledgement letter.
- 6.4.3. Stage 3 will be reviewed by the Chief Executive with a Trustee. If the complaint is made against the Chief Executive, Stage 3 will be reviewed by two Trustees.
- 6.4.4. The purpose of Stage 3 is to ensure, as far as it is practical, that the process followed in Stage 1 and/or 2 was in accordance with our policy. The case itself is not re-opened. They will check that due diligence and due process has been taken to reach the outcome. If error has been identified in Stage 1 and/or 2, they will decide whether all or part of the complaint should go back to Stage 1 and/or 2.
- 6.4.5. The written response will be consistent with that described in paragraph 6.2.4
- 6.4.6. The Stage 3 decision is final and will not be changed. If complainants are not satisfied with it, they are advised to look at the Charity Commission's guidelines regarding making a complaint about a charity. Full details of timelines and how to lodge a complaint with the Charity Commission can be seen here: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity> Complainants can also request the procedure in writing from them at 1 Drummond Gate, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2QQ and are advised to read the guidance before making a complaint to the Charity Commission as it sets out the types of complaints that it will not take forward.

7. Remedies

- 7.1. When responding to a complaint, we will explain how we intend to remedy the situation.
- 7.2. Remedies include:
 - a. An apology.
 - b. A review of practice, either in general or by the employee/volunteer concerned.
 - c. Making amendments or corrections to any records we hold.
 - d. A letter of correction, clarification or explanation to anyone affected by the issues that gave rise to the complaint.
 - e. Considering any practical action suggested by the complainant.
 - f. An attempt to resolve, so far as we are able, the original issue that prompted the complaint. Should the complaint be regarding Z2K's handling of a client's case, and the client is still happy to work with Z2K, we would offer to continue work on the case to closure.

8. Recording and monitoring complaints

- 8.1. All formal complaints will be recorded and kept on file. All complaints shall be treated in accordance with our GDPR Policy.

8.2. Casework related complaints are separate from the casefile.

8.3. The Chief Executive will report once a year to the Board of Trustees on all complaints received and how they were resolved.

9. Publicising the procedure

9.1. The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that service users are made aware that we welcome complaints from them and the complaints procedure is easily accessible by everyone.

10. Ensuring the effectiveness of the procedure

10.1 All Trustees will receive a copy of the complaints procedure.

10.2 Existing and new staff will be introduced to the complaints procedure via induction and training.

10.3 The procedure will be reviewed annually and amendments should be proposed and agreed by the Trustees.

Monitoring & Review

Date created: March 2009

Date reviewed: September 2020

Date of next review: September 2021

Responsible for Review: Delegated Trustee