

## Complaints Policy and Procedure

### Complaints Policy

#### 1. Complaints Policy Statement

*Inside Justice:*

- is committed to providing quality services to prisoners and their families referred to as 'service users' in this policy, and all other stakeholders with whom we work
- welcomes and will take seriously any concern or complaint and will look into it promptly, for resolution as quickly as possible and to ensure we can draw any lessons for future service improvements
- recognises that all service users and stakeholders
  - have the right to raise concerns or complaints about our services
  - have access to clear information on how to voice complaints and concerns
- concerns and complaints procedure is open to everyone who receives or requests a service from *Inside Justice* and people acting on their behalf
- will publish this policy and procedure on the website and make it available to anyone who asks for it.
- will deal with complaints in line with *Inside Justice* GDPR and confidentiality policy
- will keep a register of all complaints, which will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Trustees
- complaints procedure will be part of the process of monitoring the quality, effectiveness and non-discriminatory nature of its services
- All staff, volunteers and Board of Trustees members are required to read, understand and comply with this policy and its procedures

#### 2. Introduction

*Inside Justice* strives for high standards in service delivery and welcomes feedback from individuals, users of our services, stakeholders, funding bodies and anyone who works with us, on all aspects of our services. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us evaluate and improve our work.

The objectives of *Inside Justice* complaints policy and procedures are to:

- Ensure everyone knows how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be handled
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear time frames
- Provide individuals with a fair and effective way to complain about our work
- Ensure that complaints are monitored and seek to draw learning from complaints to improve our services

*Inside Justice* will ensure that we:

- Listen carefully to complaints and treat complaints as confidential, where possible
- Record, store and manage all complaints accurately and in accordance with the Data protection Act and GDPR.
- Investigate the complaint fully, objectively and within the stated time frame
- Notify the complainant of the results of the investigation and any right of appeal
- Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented in order to ensure that there is no recurrence where a complaint is upheld and to ensure learning from complaints is put into action for service improvements
- Report to trustees on an annual basis, the number of complaints received, the outcomes and any actions taken.

### **3. Definition of a complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by an individual, whether justified or not.

An individual may make a complaint if they feel *Inside Justice* has:

- Failed to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service or made a mistake in the way the service was provided
- Failed to act in a proper way
- Provided an unfair service

This policy and procedure relate only to complaints received about *Inside Justice* and its services.

### **4. Concern or Complaint**

It is important to establish the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of their developing into formal complaints.

If you have any concerns about our work please tell a staff worker or their manager as soon as possible, so they can quickly understand your concerns and try to put things right.

If you are not happy with the response to your concern and/or you want to make a formal complaint please follow the procedure below.

### **5. Complaints Procedure**

*Inside Justice* aims to settle the majority of complaints quickly and satisfactorily by the member of staff who provides the service as we also aim to do with any informal

concerns raised. The complaint may be resolved quickly by way of an apology or by an acceptable explanation to the individual.

There are four stages to the complaint's procedure:

- Stage One – the complaint
- Stage Two – investigation
- Stage Three – decision and outcomes to be communicated to the complainant and taking any ensuing actions identified
- Stage Four – appeal

## **6. Stage One - Complaint**

The complaint can be written or if the individual prefers they can tell someone at *Inside Justice*, or someone else, who will write it down for them. The complainant will need to sign it or approve by email this is their complaint.

Individuals wishing to make a complaint should contact the person who provided the service, or their line manager. Alternatively, they can contact us by writing to: *Inside Justice*, One Business Village, Emily Street, Kingston upon Hull HU9 1ND.

The complaint should include

- the complainant's name and address,
- the nature and date of the complaint, stating what is their specific concern in terms of the specific actions or failure to act and/or behaviour that are not up to the standard expected
- how they want to see it resolved.

On receipt, each complaint will be allocated a reference number and logged on the complaints register. *Inside Justice* will send confirmation that we have received the complaint within 5 working days of receiving a complaint.

## **7. Stage Two - Investigation**

All complaints at this stage should be dealt with by a manager. If they need to meet with the complainant, they will offer a meeting within seven working days of receiving the written complaint and aim to hold the meeting within 15 working days of receiving the written complaint. If the complaint is about the Chief Executive then the complaint will be handled by a Trustee.

Complaints will be fully investigated, and a written response provided to the complainant within 20 working days by the investigator. If this timetable is not possible due to the complexity of the complaint or delays in meeting the complainant or others involved in the complaint e.g. due to annual/sick leave, we will contact the complainant to explain the delay and set a new completion date.

Occasionally investigations may take longer, particularly if the complaint is complex. Should this be the case a holding letter will be sent after ten working days and a final date given for a conclusion to be reached.

The complaints register will be updated, and any pending complaints flagged so they are followed up

**8. Stage Three** – decision and outcomes to be communicated to the complainant and taking any ensuing actions identified

The complainant will receive written confirmation of the outcome of any investigation, any recommendations/remedies made, such as reviewing of policies, staff development and training or appropriate improvement to our services. Some specifics may be confidential e.g. staff disciplinary or training requirements so not disclosed to the complainant

Where the complaint is upheld an apology should be offered.

## **9. Stage Four- Appeal**

If an individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome from Stage Three they can appeal within fourteen working days of the date of the outcome. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at stage three.

The Chief Executive and/or Trustees will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 5 working days. The appeal will pass to a new investigator e.g. CE if a manager has handled stage 3, or a trustee if the CE has handled stage 3, or Chair of trustees if a trustee has handled stage 3. The investigator will review the Stage Two investigation and recommend one of the following actions within 15 working days (from receipt of the appeal)

- Uphold the action taken at Stage Three
- Make changes to the Stage Three recommendation/actions

The complainant should be informed in writing of the outcome of stage four, the decision reached about this complaint will then be final but other options available to the complainant (as listed below) should be detailed in the letter.

If after *Inside Justice* has been through the three stages and the complainant is still not satisfied with the result, they should be advised that there is no further right of appeal with *Inside Justice* and they could approach any of the following agencies for advice:

- A solicitor
- Citizens Advice Bureau

This should be done within one month of receiving the outcome from the appeal.

## **10. Anonymous complaints**

Complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if further information is required to ensure a full and fair investigation.

## **11. Data protection**

To process a complaint *Inside Justice* will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides, and which other people give in response to the complaint. We will hold this data securely and only use it to address the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applied or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

*Inside Justice* will normally destroy complaints files in a secure manner six years after the complaint has been closed.

## **12. Monitoring**

Complaints are an important tool which, alongside data provided by exit surveys, stakeholder surveys, user feedback and focus groups, will allow us to learn about the services we provide. They provide a useful source of information about how individuals see our services and how we are serving them. To ensure we can learn from complaints the following data will be collected:

- Name and address
- Name of person dealing with the complaint
- Date of complaint and response
- Nature of complaint

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- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the complaint Lessons learnt

Complaints information will be considered on a regular basis by the Management Team and reported annually to the *Inside Justice* board of Trustees. Wherever possible the data will be used to improve and develop the service.

End.

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