

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

This policy is specifically for service users. The purpose of the policy is to:

- Protect the interests of service users
- Improve the quality of services by responding to the views of people involved
- To enable people to challenge our way of working

Policy Statement

CRASAC believes it is essential that there is a clear, effective and easily understandable procedure through which any complaint can be dealt with. All complaints will be considered, using our internal procedure set out below.

CRASAC welcomes complaints and suggestions so that concerns can be addressed and improvements made, wherever possible.

CRASAC will ensure that a fair hearing is given to the complaint and that any member of staff or volunteer is also given the fullest opportunity to answer all criticisms made.

Complaints can be made about anything that gives an individual legitimate and reasonable cause for concern. This might include:

- Behaviour of staff or volunteers;
- The standard of service provided;
- Discrimination;
- Provision of inaccurate information.
- Accommodation (e.g. room facilities and access)

Our staff and volunteers are required to carry out their duties with due regard for the organisational policies, practices and protocols in place. Complaints seeking to undermine this will not be investigated or dealt with under this policy.

Certain principles will be followed during all stages of the complaints procedure:

1. **Confidentiality is protected:** including the confidentiality for both the person making the complaint and any staff member or volunteer involved in the complaint. Clearly the nature of the complaint and the identity of individuals will be disclosed to all individuals involved in dealing with the complaint.

2. **Independent investigation:** where an investigation is required, CRASAC will endeavour to ensure, where possible, that it will be carried out by someone who was not involved in the complaint.
3. **Support and Advocacy:** people making a complaint may be supported by a friend/advocate (that is, someone of their choice to help them) at any stage of the procedure.

CRASAC will ensure that every user of its services is aware that this complaints procedure exists. Copies will be made easily available to users of services.

Complaints Procedure

CRASAC wants to resolve problems satisfactorily for all involved. It is obviously best to try and resolve any problem informally with the person concerned as soon as it arises. If it is necessary to take the matter further, this should be done in line with the formal process and timescales detailed below.

At each stage everyone concerned with the complaint will be kept fully informed. The complainant is entitled to be accompanied by friend/advocate at all formal stages, to provide support. At every stage of the formal process there will be a written record on the findings and opinions expressed. This record will be available to any later stage of the procedure.

The term complainant is used to describe the person making the complaint.

Informal Procedure

This stage may be by-passed if the complaint is regarded as sufficiently 'serious'.

The complainant should discuss, at the earliest opportunity, the complaint directly with the member of staff or volunteer concerned or their supervisor, who will respond to complaints about the service. If the complainant prefers to have a 'face to face' informal discussion with the individual concerned we will endeavour to arrange for this opportunity.

If the concern is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the complainant will be advised that they can make a formal complaint. See below.

Formal Procedure

Stage 1

A formal complaint can be registered in writing on the attached complaint form. **If** it is about a service, volunteer, or member of staff it will be investigated by a member of CRASAC's management team. If the complaint is against the Chief Executive Officer, CRASAC's Management Board will nominate a member of the Board to investigate the matter.

The investigator will endeavour to carry out an investigation within 3 weeks of CRASAC receiving the complaint. This timescales may need to be extended dependent upon the availability of relevant parties and the complexity of the investigation. The complainant will be advised as soon as such a need for such an extension becomes apparent. The investigator will gather and evaluate all evidence. The results of the investigation will be reported to the complainant and to other relevant individuals within 14 days of completion of the investigation; the results of the investigation will be confirmed in writing. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they will be advised of their right to proceed to Stage 2 of the formal procedure.

Stage 2

Unless the complaint is against the Chief Executive Officer, the complainant will meet with the appropriate member of the management team. The complainant is welcome to bring a friend/advocate to the meeting. A decision about what action will be taken will be decided after that meeting and the complainant will be informed in writing within 10 days.

If the complaint is against the Chief Executive Officer the complainant will meet with a member of the Management Board.

If the member of the management team or Management Board is unable to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction, the complainant has the final right of appeal to the Chief Executive Officer (or the Chair of CRASAC's Management Board if the complaint is against the Chief Executive Officer).

Stage 3

The appeal must be made in writing within 10 days of receipt of the letter received at stage 2. The purpose of the appeal is not to reinvestigate the complaint. The grounds for appeal must be clearly stated in the appeal form. An appeal hearing will be held by the Chief Executive Officer or, if the complaint is against the Chief Executive Officer, by the Chair (or designated member of the Management Board if the Chair is unavailable) to meet with the complainant to discuss the grounds for appeal within 28 days of receiving the appeal. The appeal decision is final and will be confirmed in writing within two weeks days of the hearing. There is no further right of appeal.

Handling, Retention & Destruction of Complaints

Complaints will be seen and discussed by as few members of CRASAC as is possible whilst ensuring a prompt and fair hearing.

Complaint documents will be stored electronically on a server with limited access, and in password protected files, again with limited access. Hard copy files will be

kept in a locked non-portable filing cabinet in the Chief Executive Officer's office, which is locked when not in use.

Complaints will be kept for 7 years from the period of last interaction. The Administration Officers will have an annual schedule to go through closed files and extract any which need destroying. This will include electronic files & emails. The Chief Executive Officer has the discretion to keep Complaints for longer than this if it is felt there are unresolved issues.

Complainant's names will be noted on the Destruction of Confidential Material Register, along with the date of destruction, how it was destroyed, by who, and if appropriate, with the certificate of destruction number.

Adopted by CRASAC Ltd: 24th April 2017

Signed *(on behalf of CRASAC Management Committee)*:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RTH' followed by a stylized flourish.

Review Date: 2020