

**LINKS: THE CHESTERFIELD AND NORTH EAST
DERBYSHIRE COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE AND
ACTION LIMITED**

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction.

Links aims to provide its service users with a fair and high quality service, within its stated aims and priorities. However, if you feel that Links has failed in any of these, we would like to know. If you have a comment or suggestion as to how we could improve our services please let us know. You are welcome to contact the Chief Executive to discuss the matter.

If you do need to complain about a failure of Links to provide you with a fair service or to provide work of an acceptable standard, or if the Chief Executive feels the matter amounts to a complaint, please follow the procedure below. Links will try to respond positively to any complaint and use the opportunity to learn and to improve our services for everyone.

This procedure is for individuals or organisations that use Links' services. Some of it involves written letters. If you have difficulty reading or writing English, for any reason, other methods can be used, for example a tape recording. This procedure is also available in large print or on audio tape. Please contact the Links office if you need more information on this.

Links has professional indemnity insurance to cover the advice it gives and legal expenses cover. We may need to seek the advice of our insurers in more serious cases and this may affect our ability to keep to the time limits stated in the procedure. If this happens, we will keep you informed of the reasons for any delays at regular intervals.

The Procedure.

Stage 1 Informal Resolution

If your complaint concerns a member of staff you can write to the Chief Executive asking to meet and try to resolve the problem before starting on the Formal Complaints Procedure. If this does not prove satisfactory move on to Stage 2 of the procedure.

If the complaint is against the Chief Executive write to the Chair asking for an informal meeting.

Stage 2 Initial Complaint

What you need to do.

Write to Links explaining your complaint as fully as possible. Your letter should be addressed to the Chair of Links at Links Registered Office and marked "Private and Confidential". Please include your name, a contact address and telephone number and the name of the organisation you represent, if appropriate. We cannot respond to anonymous complaints.

What Links will do.

The Chair will contact you within 10 days with written confirmation that your complaint has been received and that an investigation has begun. If the Chair is not available, the Vice-Chair will deal with the matter. If both are unavailable another Board member will deputise.

The Chair (or deputy) will investigate the complaint by interviewing the Chief Executive and the relevant staff. The Chair may seek advice from our insurers and/or from external advisers. If the investigation is likely to be time-consuming or complex, the Chair may involve up to two other Board members. Notes will be taken of any interviews and the interviewees will receive a copy. The Chair will list any evidence seen (e.g. files, ICT material etc.).

All parties involved in the investigation will be required to keep the matter private and confidential, except that staff may seek the advice of trades unions or other advisers if they consider that the Links Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure will need to be invoked.

You will receive a copy of a "Links Complaint Investigation Report" (see attached copy) within 21 days. This will be in writing, unless you have requested that we use another medium. It will include a summary of what has been done to investigate the complaint and any proposed action to remedy the situation.

Action may include changing Links' procedures; in very serious cases, it may involve disciplinary procedures being instigated against the staff involved. On the other hand the Chair may find that your complaint is not upheld and that there is no case to answer and thus no action to be taken.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome you should complete the return slip indicating your intention to move on to Stage 2.

Stage 3 Appeal against the Chair's decision.

What you need to do.

If you are dissatisfied with the Chair's response you may appeal.

What Links will do.

You will be invited to make your appeal in person to an Appeals Panel consisting of three Links Board members not previously involved in the investigation. They will have been given a copy of the Links Complaint Investigation Report, but will not have discussed the matter with the investigators or the staff involved.

The role of the Appeals Panel is to see if your complaint has been dealt with properly and fairly and whether an appropriate decision has been reached,

not to re-investigate the complaint. Where the complaint is against a member of staff, that person will be given the opportunity to submit a written statement to the panel. This will be considered alongside the original complaint, the investigation and any action suggested to remedy the situation.

You will be given at least 7 days notice of the date, time and venue of the panel meeting and all reasonable efforts will be made to hold the meeting at a time convenient to you. You may bring someone to assist you, or to witness the procedure.

The panel will write to you within 7 days to notify you of its decision and any actions to be taken to address the complaint.

The panel's decision will be final and no further correspondence will be entered into.

Records and Confidentiality.

Records of the complaint, the investigation, any external advice and the Appeal Panel's decision will remain confidential except where specific action needs to be taken.

ADOPTED BY LINKS BOARD ON: 17th November 2015

TO BE REVIEWED NO LATER THAN: 17th November 2020

Appendix A

**LINKS COMPLAINT
INVESTIGATION REPORT**

Complainant:

Organisation:

Address:

Telephone No:

Email:

Date received:

Signed:

Date
Complainant:
notified of receipt:

Signed

Brief Outline of Complaint



Investigation Report

Complaint

investigated by:

Name:

Position:

Action to be Taken

Date result
forwarded to
Complainant:

Signed:

Return slip

Please detach and return this slip to Links.

Complainant name:

Organisation:

Please tick the appropriate box:

I am satisfied with the result of this investigation

I am not satisfied with the result of this investigation and I wish to
move on to stage 2

Date:

Signed: