COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

STATEMENT

REFUGEES WELCOME aims to ensure that the service it provides is professional, friendly, effective and participative and as such we welcome feedback on the service we provide and suggestions and comments for improvement.

Where concerns are raised, every effort should be made to resolve these informally, directly with the relevant individual.

Where resolution cannot be reached or in the case of serious concerns, and where groups or individuals feel that Refugees Welcome is not complying with its policies or with expected standards of service delivery, the following complaints procedure can be initiated by service users.
This covers complaints made by organizations or individuals about Refugees Welcome as an organization.
There is a separate procedure for Beneficiaries of the service.

Volunteers will not be subject to disciplinary procedures nor have access to grievance procedures, both of which are for employees only.

Although REFUGEES WELCOME takes seriously its duty of care towards its volunteers, volunteers do not have any legal rights unless they can prove that they are in fact employees, or that the organization has been negligent in its duty of care towards the volunteer.

Policy date: 15.11.2018
By: Anne Towers Trustee
Status: Final

Complaints procedure

Grounds of Complaint

Complaints against Refugees Welcome will be accepted as valid on the following grounds:

1. When Refugees Welcome fails to deliver good practice in its dealings with individuals or groups.
2. Because of poor or ineffective communication by Refugees Welcome to individuals or groups it is working with.
3. Failure to maintain our Equality and Diversity Policy and practice.
4. Breach of confidentiality by Refugees Welcome where the leakage of material prejudices or injures the interest of groups or individuals we work with.

If informal resolution is not possible a formal complaint should be initiated via the following procedure.

- **Stage 1 – Making a formal complaint.**

The nature of the complaint should be in accordance with the above criteria.
Contact the area Trustee/responsible person within Refugees Welcome in writing. (See Complaint Form) If it is not appropriate to speak to that Person then contact any member of the Trustee Board. See list of Trustees on the Website: **WWW.refugeeswelcome.co.uk**)

The area Trustee/ responsible person or other Trustee will contact the complainant and inform the complainant that the procedure has been initiated within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint.
If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous his/her anonymity should be considered.

- **Stage 2 – Investigation of the Complaint**

The complaint should be fully investigated by one of the Trustees being consulted, or another designated person. If the complaint is found to be substantiated the organization should take into consideration other policies, i.e. Volunteering Policy, Equality and Diversity, training etc. in forming any action plan.
If the complaint is about an individual, i.e. Trustee, Contractor, Advisor or volunteer and is deemed a valid complaint the Trustee or designated person investigating will interview the people concerned. They will report back to the Trustees Board on the outcome of the interview/s. If appropriate and necessary, the person who is subject of a complaint may be suspended from all duties with Refugees Welcome.
Following the investigation, a Trustee will communicate the findings and take any action/s required. This should take no longer than 28 days.

- **Stage 3 – Opportunity to Appeal**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the action taken by the Trustee, the complaint will be referred to the Chair of Trustees who will arrange a meeting with the complainant and agree a mutual way forward where possible.
If agreement is not possible the involvement of an independent arbitrator should be

considered. (e.g.The Northerly Synods Listening and Reconciliation Service – URC or CVSCE)
The whole matter will be put before the arbitrator and the arbitrator's findings will be deemed to be mutually binding upon Refugees Welcome and the complainant.

PLEASE NOTE:
During these proceedings the person/s who is/are the subject of complaint will not contact the complainant or the organization of the complainant at any time for any purpose.
In cases of gross misconduct or illegal activity, the person/s should be suspended from all work with Refugees Welcome until the outcome of the investigation is known and the police may be involved.

Complaint made by a Volunteer

The procedure for complaints by Volunteers of Refugees Welcome is slightly different to the formal complaints procedure to reflect the status of volunteering within the organization as set out in the initial statement of the procedure.
The following procedure is the same for all volunteers although the nominated contacts are slightly different for each project (see list of Trustees and Key Areas of Responsibility on the website. **WWW.refugeeswelcome.co.uk**).

- **Stage 1 - Initial complaint**

If you have a problem with or complaint against a member of the Refugees Welcome team, the organisation, or another volunteer, this should be raised, where possible with the support worker or the Lead Trustee covering that area of the organisations work, in the first instance. If the complaint is about the support worker, or the Lead Trustee then the matter should be referred to another Trustee. (as above). A discussion meeting will be arranged at which you can be accompanied by a nominated person of your choice. If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage, then you should proceed to stage 2.

- **Stage 2 - In writing**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the oral complaint, you should make a formal complaint in writing to any member of the Trustee Board. Any written complaint should be made within 1 month from your initial complaint and you should expect a written response from the organisation within two weeks of receipt of your letter. To contact a Trustee email: refugeescheshireeast@gmail.com putting the name of the Trustee in the subject bar.

- **Stage 3 - Opportunity to appeal**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, then you can appeal to the Chair of Trustees. You can have a nominated person present with you at this meeting. The Chair of Trustees (or designated Trustee dealing with the appeal) will respond within 1 month of your appeal and the decision is final.

Complaints about you as volunteer

This part of the procedure is about complaints made about a volunteer either informally or as an outcome of a formal complaint. This gives you, the volunteer, the opportunity to be told why a complaint has arisen, the opportunity to state your case, and the chance to appeal.

Sometimes minor issues can arise while volunteering, such as about how a volunteer is fitting into the team or about not being able to meet the required standards when undertaking tasks, or about reliability.

Such issues would usually come up during regular contact with the support worker (If in post) or Lead Trustee for the area or be reported to the support worker or Lead Trustee. Hopefully this could be resolved without resorting to formal procedures.

- **Stage 1 – Oral discussion**

The first step involves discussion between the volunteer and the support worker for all projects or lead Trustee for a particular area, to discuss any external factors influencing your ability to carry out tasks, your behaviour or attitude. We would then identify goals that will help you to fulfil your role, and offer extra support, oversight and training where necessary. We would agree a deadline for reviewing the situation. If the complaint was raised by someone else, and if appropriate, we will keep them informed of the measures we are taking to rectify the situation.

- **Stage 2 – Written warning**

If the issue has not been resolved by the oral discussion or the review, then the support worker or Lead Trustee will issue you with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. You will be given the opportunity to state your case to an alternative Trustee. If you wish, you may be accompanied by a person of your choice.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set, and help offered. However, if at this point, we decide to ask you to step down as a Refugees Welcome Volunteer, you would be given the opportunity to appeal. Please be assured that a decision to ask a volunteer to leave would be a last resort.

- **Stage 3 - Opportunity to appeal**

If you have been asked to leave, then you can appeal in writing to the Chair of Trustees. The Chair of Trustees (or designated Trustee if the Chair has previously been involved) will respond within 1 month of your appeal, and the decision is final.

Exceptions

There are some occasions when volunteers will not be able to continue their roles (with immediate effect) whilst an investigation is carried out. These include but are not limited to: acts that constitute gross misconduct, e.g. theft, assault, act of violence, sexual impropriety, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents, harassment or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or a matter of safeguarding concern.

The decision to suspend a volunteer would be confirmed to the volunteer in writing. In some cases, legal proceedings may need to be concluded before this part of the complaint's procedure can take place.

Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually for currency and accuracy by the Chair of Trustees or individuals delegated by him/her. This does not prevent any changes taking place to this policy at any other time due to changes in practice or legislation.

Reviewed: Nov 26

SIGNED BY: Nicky Campbell **DATE: 9/11/26**
[Trustee/Chair of Trustees]

Next Review date: Nov 27

Key to job roles referred to in this policy & procedures:

There is a list of all Trustees on the 'Refugees Welcome Current Trustee List page ' on the Website. www.refugeeswelcome.co.uk

All volunteers have contact information for the Lead Trustee or support worker (email and phone number.)

To contact the Chair of Trustees or any Trustee please email:

refugeescheshireeast@gmail.com

and put FAO: (the name) in the subject bar

Complaints Form

1. DETAILS OF COMPLAINT (to be completed by complainant or officer taking complaint)

Name : ..... Date of Feedback: .....

Organization

Address

Telephone : ..... Email: .....

Nature of complaint: (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

2. ACTION TAKEN BY REFUGEES WELCOME

OFFICE USE ONLY

3. CLOSING OF COMPLAINT

Has feedback satisfactorily resolved complaint YES / NO
Any further action required, (use separate sheet)