

## Flexibus Policies and Procedures

Title: 4.5.16 Complaints Policy and Procedure

Issue No: 2

Policy created and 1<sup>st</sup> approval date: October 2014

This Policy has been approved by the Board of Directors. Any additions or amendments to this or related policies can be submitted by any authorized member of staff, working group, board member, to the Board of Directors for approval.

Policies are amended and update as operational or strategic changes developed either by the day to day changing environment or events that require procedural change.

External experts can be consulted where deemed necessary before for approval.

### 4.5.16 Complaints Policy and Procedure

#### Introduction

Flexibus seek to offer a high-quality service to all users. We understand that there will be times when people who use our services wish to make suggestions to help us to improve these services, or to complain about the service they have received or feel they should be receiving.

We wish to ensure that everyone who uses our services is aware that they have the right to raise concerns or make complaints.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure, which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at Meath Accessible Transport Project Ltd- Flexibus knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

#### Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of our service

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### Who Can Complain?

- Any person using, or wishing to use, one of our services.
- A person who legitimately represents someone who uses, or wishes to use, one of our services.

### What Can Be Complained About?

- The Complaints Procedure can be used to raise any concerns about the service(s) you are receiving or feel you should be receiving.

### Can I Get Help In Making My Complaint Known?

The person dealing with your complaint will try to assist you in whichever way is appropriate e.g. in putting your complaint in writing. If you wish to make a complaint verbally, you can bring someone along, either for support or to act on your behalf.

### Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

### To Whom Do I Make My Complaint?

- In the first instance you should normally make a complaint, verbally or in writing, directly to the member of staff providing the relevant service. Or you may, if you prefer, make a complaint, in writing, to the Manager or the Chairperson of the Board. However, in the latter case, the Chairperson of the Board would normally refer the matter to the Manager, unless your complaint refers directly to the Manager.

The staff member to contact:

Miriam Mc Kenna - Manager.

Office Hours is Monday to Friday 8am to 5.30pm.

Contact number is 046 9074830.

Email is [Flexibus@locallinklmf.ie](mailto:Flexibus@locallinklmf.ie)

### Complaints Procedure of Meath Accessible Transport Project CLG - Flexibus

#### Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded. The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Flexibus For example Passenger
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words. For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see Appendix 1

#### Resolving Complaints

**Stage One** In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Manager within one week.

On receiving the complaint, the Manager records it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, they delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within [a week]. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within [four weeks]. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

**Stage Two** If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within [a week] of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chairperson may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

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Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within [four weeks]. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

### **Variation of the Complaints Procedure:**

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage Two review.

### **Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

### Appendix 1

#### **Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints**

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
  - Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
  - If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues

