

RISE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Purpose: To set out the procedure for handling and responding to complaints and comments from service users and other stakeholders. Must be read in conjunction with the RISE Complaints Policy.

Applies from:	December 2021
Review date:	November 2023
Applies to:	RISE Service Users, Stakeholders and Partners
Policy Owner:	Chief of Operations
Level:	1

RISE Complaints Procedure

1. The RISE procedure has three stages:

1. **First Stage** – Before an investigation begins the person receiving the complaint/concern or their direct line manager will attempt to resolve swiftly on the spot or within one week. Where this cannot be achieved Stage 1 will formally begin with problem solving investigation where the manager and/or staff of the service involved discuss the problem with the complainant, gather information and actively attempt to resolve matters. A written response is then (usually) given – if this is not appropriate the response should be given in an alternative manner and the reasons for this recorded alongside the content of the communication.
2. **Second Stage** – If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome they have the right to request that their complaint is taken to Stage Two. Here the Chief Executive Officer of RISE or their delegated manager reviews the information gathered, initiates further investigation of the situation and responds to the complainant. Escalation to Stage Two should be within three months of the conclusion of Stage 1.
3. **Third Stage** – If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right to request further consideration by the Board of Trustees. Escalation to Stage Three should be within three months of conclusion of Stage 2.

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to RISE at:

RISE, Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG. or by e-mail at information@riseuk.org.uk

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 01273 622 828 or in person to any of RISE's staff, volunteers or trustees at our offices or any location where RISE operates.

2. Receiving Complaints:

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other route into RISE services. All complaints must be entered onto the RISE complaints log within 24 hours of receiving the complaint.

The person receiving the complaint, whether by phone, email, digital media or in person, will:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number / email
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to RISE (for example: service user, partner, supporter etc.)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure and share this with them
- 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

If the above process is not appropriate due to e.g. the age of the complainant, specific communication needs or preferences, mental health needs etc., the process should be communicated using agreed alternative means and the content recorded appropriately.

If a complaint raises concerns that come under other policies, then those policies must be followed as well. For example complaints may raise issues relating to:

- The Safeguarding of children or adults

- The Disciplinary, or other related staff management policy

In the above cases, safeguarding and proper staff management procedures must be followed, and at times may take precedence in terms of urgency or process; however, they should never prevent the full and timely investigation of a complaint.

In addition, any policy or procedure may itself be the subject of a complaint. Complainants are not expected to know or to name policies, but rather this is for the investigating officer to consider and decide.

Where a commenter is reluctant to have their feedback or comment labelled as a complaint but is also dissatisfied and wants further investigation i.e. warranting escalation to Stage Two, staff should explain that:

- we view complaints as opportunities for us to learn, improve, and to do them the courtesy of responding to their experience, rather than necessarily as a negative
- because they want further investigation of something they are dissatisfied with, that the term complaint is the most accurate way to describe it
- they have the option to state whether or not they want to be communicated with about the outcomes of the investigation and that they can change their mind about this by contacting the investigating officer within the timescales of the investigation, or indeed beyond although they should be aware that the case will be closed three months after our last communication with them, limiting their opportunity to input to the final report.

3. Resolving Complaints:

3.1 Stage One – Informal resolution /investigation by Staff or Manager

When a complaint is received, it may be simple or complex in its content. If it is possible all staff have the delegated authority and responsibility to aim to resolve the complaint within 1 week if they are able to. **All complaints, no matter how big or small, or whether they are labelled as a complaint or not, must be added to the complaints log within 24 hours by the person receiving the complaint.**

If a complaint is not able to be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction within 1 week, the Stage One procedure starts - see flow chart.

No response to complaint investigation?

Ideally complaints are judged to be resolved by the complainant, and staff should make every effort to communicate with them to ascertain their views. Where staff have made reasonable attempts to do this but have not been able to, staff should:

- Write or email the complainant letting them know that if there is no further contact from them that the complaint will be closed 3 months from the date of the letter
- List the complainant as 'unable to reach' on the complaints spreadsheet.
- Review at 3 months and mark as closed on the spreadsheet

Complaints received via the RISE complaints email address will be passed onto the relevant staff member / manager within 24 working hours. The staff member concerned or the manager will then either resolve the complaint on the spot or at least with-in one week. If not resolved they will allocate to an investigator and commence Stage One of the process. The complaints log will be updated by the manager or investigator.

At Stage One, ***the responsibility for overseeing the handling of the complaint rests with the relevant manager.*** However, where appropriate they may delegate the investigation to a member of staff responsible for the service connected to the complaint. The manager will retain overall responsibility for ensuring that it is handled appropriately i.e. within timeframes and recorded accurately.

The investigator (manager or delegate) should speak to all relevant people, review case notes (if from a service user) and any other relevant information. ***The Complaints Investigation Form must be completed at all stages during the investigation.*** The investigator must ensure that the RISE complaints log remains updated and accurate and if applicable, the case management system. Investigation forms must be saved in the complaints folder and sent to HR when the investigation concludes if they involve a member of staff.

If the complaint relates to a specific member of staff / volunteer, they will be informed and given an opportunity to respond. They will be advised on HR policies where relevant.

If the complaint is serious and/or sensitive e.g. involving a potential conflict of interest across partner organisations or between service users, the Chief of Operations (or equivalent) must be consulted and will make a decision about what

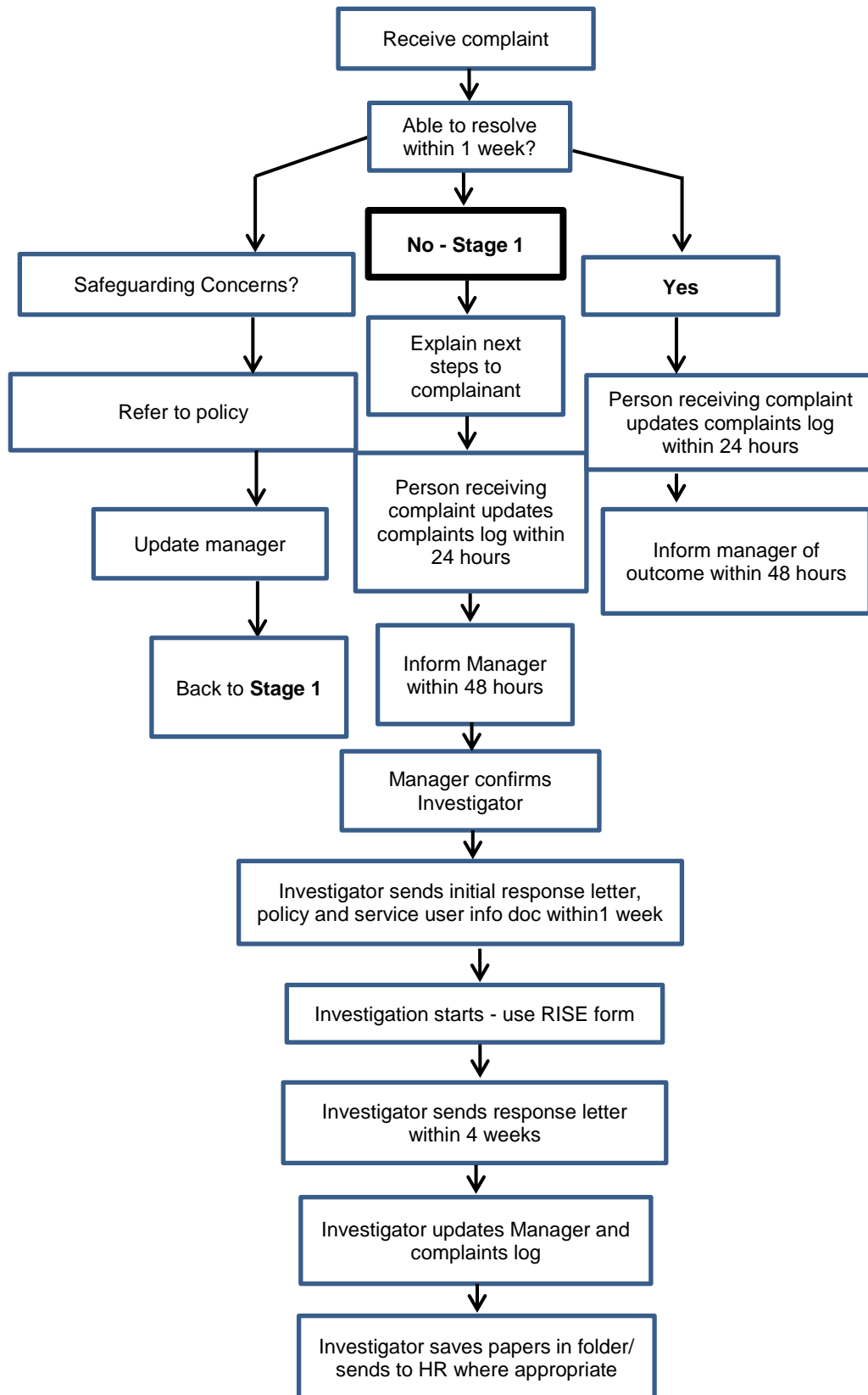
grade the investigation should sit at. The Chief of Operations will update the CEO as necessary.

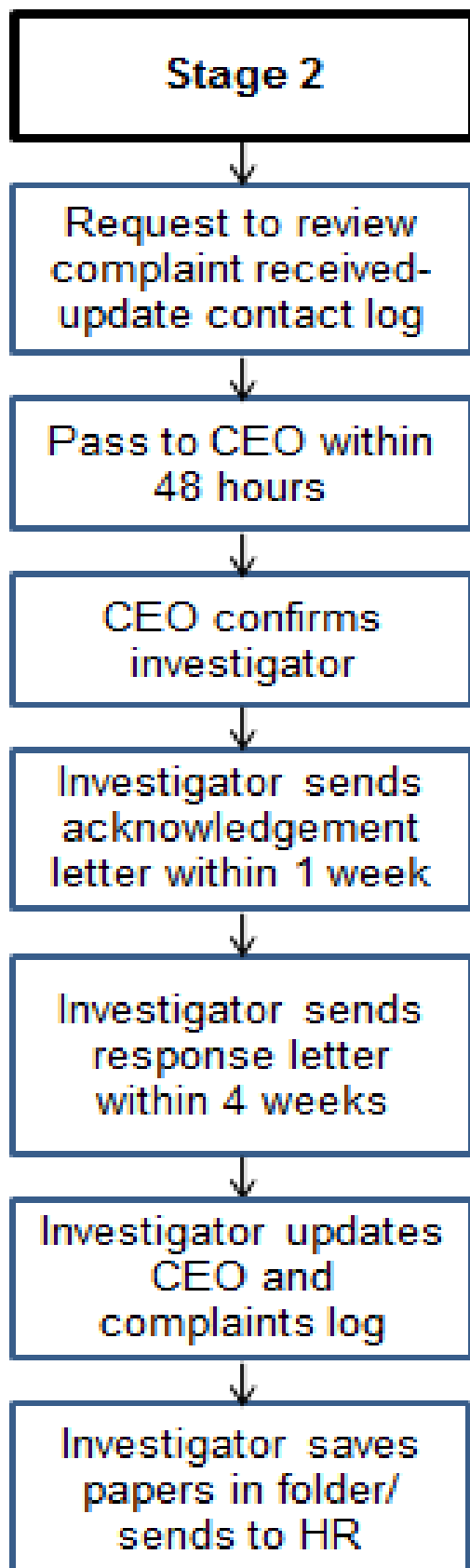
Stage One Timelines

Complaints will be acknowledged in writing or agreed alternative means by the investigator within one week of the complaint being received. The acknowledgement will say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of the RISE Complaints Policy and procedure will be attached.

Complainants will usually receive a response letter within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will 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 will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. See chart below.





3.2 Stage Two – Review by CEO

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at CEO level. This request will be made no more than three months from the conclusion at Stage One. At this stage, the complaint will be passed by the person receiving the request to the CEO within 48 hours. The CEO may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitable senior person to do so.

The request for CEO level review will be acknowledged in writing within one week of receipt by the CEO or the delegated investigator. The acknowledgement will say who will deal with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The investigator will review the paperwork of the case and speak with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. The investigator will update the complaints log and RISE case management systems.

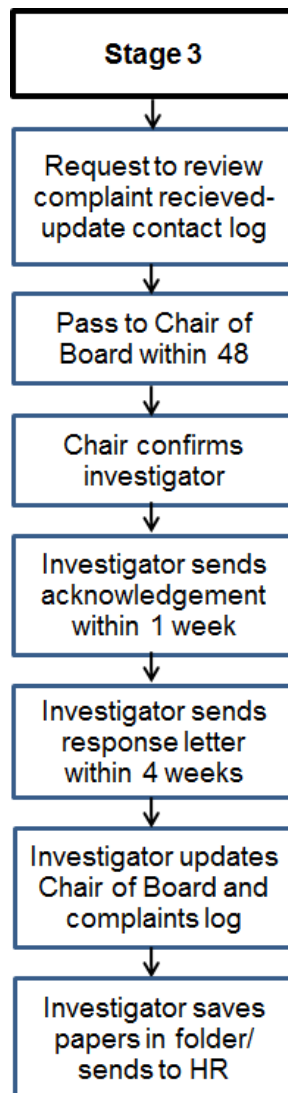
If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. The person who investigated the original complaint at Stage One will be kept informed of what is happening.

Complainants will usually receive a response within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will 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 will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

3.3 Stage Three – Review by the Board of Trustees

Where the complainant is still not satisfied, the complaint can request a review by the Chair of the Board of Trustees. This request will be made no more than three months from the conclusion at Stage Two. The person receiving the request will pass this to the Chair of the Board of Trustees usually within 48 hours. The Chair or another Trustee (*delegated by the Chair*) will send an acknowledgement letter within one week. The Board investigator will review the decision of the CEO and decide whether to uphold this decision or not. The decision taken at this stage is final. We will aim to send a letter within four weeks of the receipt of the complaint, where not possible the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay. See chart below.



3.4 What next? Not part of RISE Internal Process

Stage three is the last and final stage of the RISE Complaints Procedure.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the internal findings or process, they may refer their complaint to the complaints procedure of the relevant funder.

The complainant may request Investigation by a relevant body (Charity Commission, Women's Aid Federation England, Fundraising Standards, Housing Ombudsman, Advertising Standards or other appropriate Independent Ombudsman) and can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of

complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: www.charitycommission.gov.uk or call the Helpline (available 9am to midday, Monday to Friday) 0300 066 9197.

4. Variation of the Complaints Procedure:

The RISE Board may vary the procedure to avoid a conflict of interest or to allow sufficient time/resource to conduct the investigation.

We reserve the right to decline to investigate complaints which have previously been substantively investigated.

5. Monitoring and Learning from Complaints:

Complaints are logged as they arise and reported where required. They are reviewed by the Board to identify volumes and trends. It is the responsibility of all staff receiving/investigating complaints to keep timely and accurate records on RISE systems.