

## The FEDERATION OF FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETIES COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### COMPLAINTS HANDLING

#### WE PROMISE THAT:

- All complaints will be investigated objectively and confidentially
- Any person who complains will not be penalised in any way
- We will seek to deal with your complaint within an agreed time

If for some reason that is not possible we will inform you and give an explanation as to why and how long it will be before the investigation will be completed.

#### IT IS OUR INTENTION to try to find out from YOU

- The facts of your complaint
- What has gone wrong so far as you are concerned
- What you feel you would like us to do to put things right.

#### WE WILL

- Check the facts
- Interview colleagues, directors, volunteers and consultants as appropriate
- Consider where we might have gone wrong
- Establish the effect of our failings on you
- See what ( if anything) we can or should do to put things right
- Apologise to you if we were wrong

You have the right to ask us to convene a Complaints Review Panel to review our handling of your Formal Complaint.

**We ask though that all complaints are made within 3 months of the occurrence of the event about which you have a complaint.**

You can do this by completing and sending to The Federation a Complaint Form and stating that you wish to make a complaint indicating if it is Informal, at that stage, or if it is to be treated as a Formal Complaint.

We appreciate that sometimes our level of service may be found wanting by you. We much regret this. This is why we have this written Complaints Procedure.

Our detailed Complaints Procedure and a Complaint Form are available for downloading from The Federation's Website ([www.ffhs.org.uk](http://www.ffhs.org.uk)) or can be sent by post if you ask for a copy by writing to The Federation's registered address at Artillery House 15 Byrom Street Manchester M3 4PF

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**ALL** complaints are treated seriously and we want to resolve issues that you might have with us, if this is possible.

Whenever a complaint is made about any part of our service, every attempt is made to resolve it directly with the directors or consultants or volunteers responsible for that particular service.

Anyone who receives a service from us can make a Complaint. This Complaints Procedure has been adopted to enable us to try to deal with this.

We do not have any employees and all members of the executive committee are unpaid trustees of the charity. We have retained the services of consultants to handle certain tasks for us and also rely upon volunteers for other aspects of our work.

We would ask you to bear this in mind. We believe we give a good service, diligently and professionally with the minimum of delay but as stated, most of what we do is done by individuals who give up their free time to assist. They often have their own jobs to attend to and are not expected to devote their time to the Federation as if it were a full time job-which it is not.

We have procedures for dealing with two (2) types of complaint:

- an Informal Complaint and
- a Formal Complaint.

### **INFORMAL COMPLAINT**

This ought to be capable of being resolved easily because the nature of the complaint will be of a fairly minor nature. For example, failing to reply to letters or emails within a reasonable time; promising to take action but failing to do so through forgetfulness or inertia; misaddressing correspondence for a first time. These are aggravating issues which occur every day in the best run organisations but where the end result is minor irritation rather than serious loss.

We hope that by raising your concerns informally to the person who has been handling your matter you will be able to discuss and agree with them a resolution of your complaint. It may be that we will apologise to you and that will be sufficient. Equally you may prefer another member of the board to investigate your complaint and resolve it with you. This person might be the Chairman or the Company Secretary, someone of significant seniority but who has a working knowledge of the way the Charity works. We can agree with you who will be suitable as this is an Informal Complaint.

We realise that sometimes it is not possible to resolve a complaint informally, or that you prefer your complaint to be investigated by someone else in a more formal way.

If this is the case, you should ask for or download a Complaint Form and after reading it return the Form to us duly completed as indicated so that the Complaint can be addressed more fully and formally. This then becomes a 'Formal Complaint'.

## FORMAL COMPLAINT

Certain problems are more serious at the outset and they should be treated as a Formal Complaint from the start.

You may prefer that the person against whom you feel you have a complaint is not involved in trying to resolve the issues. For example, they may, in your opinion, have been extremely rude or used inappropriate language. You may believe that there has been some criminal or unprofessional action which must be investigated independently.

Following receipt of a Complaint Form, the Formal Complaint will be registered by the Company Secretary and within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the Complaint Form, an Investigating Officer will be appointed .. You will normally be advised of the name of the Investigating Officer at that time and certainly within fourteen (14) days of your Complaint Form being received.

The Investigating Officer will usually be a Director of The Federation or, if the Complaint refers to a Director, the Company Secretary.

The Investigating Officer will discuss your complaint with you and interview all relevant persons. All appropriate files will also be examined before a *Complaint Investigation Report* is completed. This will usually be completed within twenty-eight (28) days of his/her appointment but given the location of persons who need to be interviewed or files seen, it might not always be possible for this time limit to be met. If it is unlikely to be completed within the stated time limit then you will be notified and a new date given.

## COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION REPORT

This Report will describe:

- your complaint,
- the circumstances surrounding it, and
- what action (if any) should be or has been taken to try and resolve it.

The Investigating Officer will reach a conclusion as speedily as possible as to whether or not your Formal Complaint can be supported (upheld) and will make any recommendations thought necessary. Recommendations are made in order to put things right, to improve services and to ensure mistakes are not repeated in the future.

Within fourteen (14) days of the Complaint Investigation Report being received, a written response to your Formal Complaint will be provided to you by the Investigating Officer . If the Formal Complaint concerns the Chairman then the Vice-Chairman will respond, failing him the Company Secretary. You will be given a copy of the Complaint Investigation Report and an opportunity to comment upon it.

The recommendations of the Investigating Officer will be put into effect in a timely manner.

If you do not accept the Complaint Investigation Report then you **must within fourteen (14) days of its receipt** state in writing your reasons for non-acceptance and send your written reasons to the person who wrote the report. This will cause the matter to be reviewed by a **Complaints Review Panel**. If no response is received from you within that time we will assume you accept the Complaint Investigation Report and its findings and recommendations and the Formal Complaint will be treated as resolved and a note to that effect made by The Federation on its Complaints Register.

## COMPLAINTS REVIEW PANEL

A **Complaints Review Panel** can be called upon to consider your dissatisfaction at the outcome of the handling of your Formal Complaint but ONLY if you make your dissatisfaction known as stated above within 14 days of receipt of the Complaint Investigation Report.

This time limit is short but it is important that you adhere to it. If you do **not** do so you will lose your right to have the Complaint Investigation Report reviewed.

The **Complaints Review Panel** will comprise 3 persons, chaired by a solicitor and include one of the Federation's Vice Presidents and the chairman of a Member Society.

They will be sent copies of all correspondence regarding your Complaint, including the Complaint Form and the Complaint Investigation Report.

Their task will be to review your Formal Complaint and the Complaint Investigation Report along with your reasons for rejecting the outcome.

It is important for resolving the matter that **you** put in writing your reasons for rejecting the findings and recommendations of the Complaint Investigation Report.

Within twenty-eight (28) days of it being established, the Panel will report back to you and The Federation, in writing, with their decision, findings and, if applicable, recommendations. These will be noted on the Complaints Register.

The decision of the Panel will be final and binding upon you and The Federation and there will be no further right of appeal or any further process through which we can consider your Complaint.

Your rights will have been exhausted and the Complaints Procedure completed.

**THE FEDERATION OF FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETIES**

**COMPLAINT(S) FORM**

1. Have you complained about this matter before? ..... YES/NO
2. To Whom? [Please name individual].....
3. When? [Please give date] .....
4. Were you dissatisfied with the way in which your Informal complaint was handled and wish us to treat your Complaint as a formal Complaint? ..... YES/NO
5. Have you read our complaints procedure leaflet?..... YES/NO
6. Would you agree to try to resolve this complaint without it being formally registered as a Formal Complaint?..... YES/NO

**IF** you answer **YES** in **6** above we will contact you within 14 days of receipt of this Form and discuss with you your Complaint and try within 28 days of receiving your Complaint Form to resolve your Complaint as stated in our Complaints Procedure. If your Complaint is an **informal complaint** we hope to achieve a resolution by speaking to you and then directly with the directors, consultants or volunteers responsible for that particular part of our service.

**IF** you answer either **YES** in 4 or **NO** in 6 above we will:-

- confirm that we have your form within 14 days of receipt and
- confirm that we are treating your complaint as a **Formal Complaint**
- register your Complaint as such and
- appoint an Investigating Officer who will try to resolve it as stated in the Complaints Procedure.

As stated there, if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of an Informal Complaint you can ask us to treat it as a Formal Complaint by completing a Complaint Form to that effect. We will proceed to investigate accordingly.

If you remain dissatisfied you can ask us to convene the Complaints Review Panel and the relevant procedures as described in the Complaints Procedure will apply.

Signature: .....

Date: .....

FULL NAMES and, if on behalf of a body, the name of the body you represent  
[BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE]

Please return this completed form either in an envelope marked 'Private & Confidential' to the Company Secretary at the Charity's registered address at Artillery House 15, Byrom Street, Manchester M3 4PF

or

If preferred by email to [legal@ffhs.org.uk](mailto:legal@ffhs.org.uk)