



Complaints Policy

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Policy Scope

The purpose of this document is to set out for all parties concerned SNVB's policy and procedures for dealing with complaints.

1. Policy Statement

SNVB is committed to continually improving the quality of its services and creating a positive and supportive environment for beneficiaries, staff and volunteers.

We value all feedback, whether positive or negative, as it provides an important opportunity to learn, improve our services and ensure that we are meeting the needs of those we support.

We recognise that, on occasion, an individual may feel dissatisfied with the service they have received, or with an aspect of their experience with SNVB or a member of our team. We welcome the opportunity to listen to concerns and work towards a fair, effective and timely resolution.

Anyone who is unhappy with any aspect of SNVB's services, policies, procedures or the conduct of a member of our team has the right to raise a complaint, either formally or informally.

If a complaint contains an allegation, disclosure, or suspicion of abuse, neglect, harm, or a breach of safeguarding, it must not be handled under the standard complaints procedure or resolved informally. Any such concern must immediately be escalated in accordance with SNVB's Safeguarding Policy & Procedures and referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or statutory authorities.

SNVB takes all complaints seriously. Every complaint will be treated fairly, respectfully and sensitively, regardless of who raises it or the nature of the concern. Complaints will be investigated appropriately and handled as promptly as possible, with the aim of reaching a fair and satisfactory resolution.

We see complaints and feedback as an important part of improving the way we work and ensuring that our services continue to meet the needs and expectations of the people we support.

2. Responsibility

Overall responsibility for maintaining the quality of SNVB's services rests with the Board of Trustees. The Board will ensure that appropriate standards are established and maintained, and that the views and experiences of beneficiaries, staff and volunteers are taken into consideration when reviewing and developing services.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy and ensuring that the associated procedures are followed in practice. This includes making sure that feedback and complaints are handled appropriately, consistently and within reasonable timescales.

Everyone working with or for SNVB, including staff, volunteers and Trustees, have a role to play in supporting this approach. All individuals are encouraged to listen to feedback, raise concerns where appropriate and contribute to creating an open, respectful and learning-focused organisation.

3. Who Can Make a Complaint?

SNVB welcomes complaints and feedback from anyone who has an interest in, or experience of, our services. This may include:

- Beneficiaries and people who use, or have attempted to use, our services;
- A family member, carer, advocate or other representative acting on behalf of a beneficiary;
- SNVB employees, volunteers or Trustees;
- Representatives from statutory or voluntary organisations;
- Funders, commissioners, partners or other stakeholders.

Where a complaint is made on behalf of another person, SNVB may need to confirm that the individual has consent to raise the complaint, where appropriate.

SNVB will not normally investigate complaints that are submitted anonymously, as this can make it difficult to clarify the concerns raised or provide an appropriate response. However, anonymous information may still be considered where it identifies a potential concern about the quality, safety or delivery of our services.

Complaints containing abusive, threatening, or discriminatory language will not be tolerated. While SNVB remains committed to addressing any legitimate underlying concerns, we reserve the right to limit or modify communication to ensure a safe, respectful environment for our staff and volunteers.

4. Informal Complaints

Wherever possible, SNVB aims to resolve concerns quickly and at the earliest appropriate opportunity. An informal complaint may be raised verbally, either in person or by telephone, or submitted by email or letter.

The person receiving the complaint should listen carefully, acknowledge the concern and, where possible, seek to resolve the matter directly. Depending on the nature of the complaint, this may involve the relevant member of staff or an appropriate manager discussing the issue with the complainant and agreeing any necessary action.

Some concerns may require further consideration or investigation before a response can be provided. Where this is necessary, the complainant will be advised of the expected timescale. SNVB will aim to provide a response within three weeks, although this may take longer where the matter is particularly complex or additional information is required.

All informal complaints must be brought to the attention of the relevant manager. Where appropriate, the matter should be escalated to a more senior member of staff.

Complaint information will be reviewed periodically to identify recurring issues, areas for improvement and opportunities to strengthen our services.

A complainant may choose to make a formal complaint at any stage if they do not feel that their concern has been resolved informally.

5. Formal complaints

A formal complaint should normally be submitted in writing and should provide sufficient information to allow SNVB to understand the nature of the concern and investigate it appropriately.

Anyone wishing to make a formal complaint should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer, who will explain the complaints process and provide appropriate support if required.

SNVB recognises that not everyone will be able to put their complaint in writing. Where an individual has difficulty doing so, a member of staff can assist by recording the complaint based on what the individual tells them. The written record should, where possible, include the complainant's name and contact details, the nature of the complaint and any relevant information they wish to provide.

Once a formal complaint has been received, the Chief Executive Officer will acknowledge receipt within seven days. The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint has been received and provide information about the expected timescale for investigation and response.

The Chief Executive Officer or General Manager will normally oversee and/or undertake the investigation. Where the complaint concerns the Chief Executive Officer, or where their involvement could create a conflict of interest, the matter will instead be referred to an appropriate Trustee nominated by the Board to oversee the investigation.

The investigation will be carried out fairly, objectively and sensitively. The person investigating the complaint may speak with relevant individuals, review records and consider any other information necessary to establish the facts.

SNVB will aim to provide a written response within three weeks of receiving a formal complaint. Where a longer period is required, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and given an indication of when they can expect a response.

The outcome and any actions arising from the investigation will be communicated to the complainant in writing.

6. If the Complainant Remains Dissatisfied

If a complainant remains unhappy following the formal response, they may request a further review by writing to the Chair of the SNVB Board of Trustees.

The request should explain which aspects of the original response the complainant remains dissatisfied with and provide any additional information they wish to be considered.

Where an individual is unable to put their concerns in writing, SNVB will make reasonable efforts to provide appropriate assistance.

The Chair of the Board, or another Trustee appointed by the Chair where appropriate, will consider the complaint and determine whether any further investigation or action is required. The outcome of this review will be communicated to the complainant.

This stage represents SNVB's internal complaints process and will normally constitute the final stage of the procedure.

All formal complaints, together with their outcomes and any actions identified, should be recorded and stored securely.

7. Learning from Complaints and Compliments

SNVB views complaints, comments and compliments as valuable sources of information that can help improve our services.

Feedback will be considered at an appropriate level within the organisation and, where relevant, discussed during staff or management meetings. Learning from complaints may be used to review procedures, improve service delivery, identify training needs or make changes to the way services are provided.

The Board of Trustees will receive appropriate information about complaints and compliments so that Trustees can maintain oversight of service quality and identify any significant or recurring issues.

Where appropriate, complaints will be reviewed collectively and anonymously to identify trends and ensure that learning is shared without unnecessarily disclosing personal information.

8. Providing Feedback on SNVB Services

SNVB encourages beneficiaries, families, staff, volunteers and other stakeholders to provide feedback about their experiences of our services.

Feedback can be provided in a number of ways, including:

- Speaking directly to a member of staff;
- Providing feedback through surveys or feedback forms;
- Raising a concern informally;
- Making a formal complaint where appropriate.

SNVB will use feedback to help evaluate the effectiveness of our services and inform future planning and development. Feedback may also be used to identify areas where services are working well and should be maintained or developed further.

9. Role of Volunteers

Volunteers are not responsible for investigating or resolving complaints.

If a beneficiary, member of the public or other individual approaches a volunteer with a concern or complaint about SNVB, the volunteer should listen respectfully, acknowledge the concern and explain that the matter needs to be passed to an appropriate member of staff.

The volunteer should then inform their supervisor or the relevant member of staff as soon as reasonably possible.

Volunteers should not attempt to investigate the complaint, provide assurances about its outcome or become involved in resolving the matter themselves. Their role is to ensure that the concern is taken seriously and passed promptly to someone who has responsibility for managing complaints.

10. Role of Staff

All SNVB staff are expected to respond to complaints and concerns in a professional, respectful and supportive manner. Complaints should be taken seriously and viewed as an opportunity to understand concerns and improve our services. Staff should remain calm and avoid becoming defensive, regardless of the nature of the complaint.

Where possible, the complainant should be directed to the member of staff or manager who is best placed to respond to their concerns. If that person is unavailable, the staff member receiving the complaint should listen carefully, acknowledge the concerns raised and explain how the complainant can access SNVB's Complaints Policy. The staff member should also record the complaint and obtain the complainant's contact details so that the appropriate person can follow up.

Complaint records should be completed accurately and stored securely in accordance with SNVB's record-keeping and data protection requirements. Complaint records will be retained to support organisational learning, identify recurring issues and help SNVB improve the quality of its services.

11. Where There May Be a Conflict of interest

If a complaint concerns a particular staff member, volunteer, Trustee or an area of work in which the person receiving the complaint is directly involved, they should not attempt to investigate or resolve the matter themselves.

Instead, they should explain to the complainant that another person will need to handle the complaint to ensure that it is considered fairly and impartially. The concern should then be passed promptly to the relevant manager or senior member of staff, who will take responsibility for deciding how the complaint should be progressed.

Where the complaint concerns a manager or senior member of staff, it should be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer or, where appropriate, the Chair of the Trustee Board.