



# FIRST STOP CENTRE

## Complaints Procedure

### 1. Introduction

First Stop Centre aims to provide a service which helps and empowers visitors as fully as possible. From time to time visitors may feel that this aim and the stated objectives of the service have not been met (a summary of our objectives is given on the Visitors' Information Sheet). We would like to know about this and do our best to put it right. We cannot meet everyone's needs all the time, but we will take complaints seriously. It may be difficult for visitors to complain to people with whom they have a lot of contact, so alternative channels are available to them.

### 2. Informal Resolution of Problems

Many problems arise from misunderstandings and genuine mistakes and can be resolved by talking to a member of staff. Every attempt should be made to resolve a complaint at the time that it arises. However, visitors have the right to make formal complaints if they feel that the problem cannot be resolved in this way.

### 3. How to complain

Formal complaints should be made in writing if possible; if this is difficult a friend, advocate or member of staff may be able to help. If this is not possible the complaint may be dictated to the person to whom the complaint is made, or it may be recorded on a standard tape cassette; facilities for tape recording can be made available at First Stop Centre. The complaint should be as specific as possible and should include details of the failure in the service, together with details of any witnesses or evidence, as appropriate.

### 4. Who to complain to

Complaints about other visitors, guests and general aspects of the service should be made to the Centre Manager or a member of staff.

Complaints about a volunteer, casual employee, or staff should be made to the Centre Manager. However, if the person making the complaint feels uncomfortable about this, the complaint may be made direct to the Management Committee.



Complaints about the Centre Manager should be made to the Management Committee through the Secretary (contact details are given on the Visitors' Information Sheet).

5. What happens

How a complaint is handled will depend on who received it and how serious it is. Complaints reported to a member of staff will be investigated by that person and the outcome reported to the Management Committee. Complaints made to the Management Committee will be investigated by a complaints sub-committee convened for this purpose and normally comprising at least three members of the Management Committee, who will report to the full Management Committee. Members of staff will be informed of complaints made about them.

In the normal course of events, you may expect to receive a response to a verbal complaint within 7 days and a response to a written complaint within 14 days. If, however, your complaint is a complex one, or a very serious one that needs to be referred to a full meeting of the Management Committee, or one that requires detailed investigation, then a full response may take some weeks, but you will be kept informed of the attention that is being given to it.

A verbal complaint may receive a verbal response. A written or recorded complaint will always receive a written or recorded response.

6. If you are not satisfied

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been properly dealt with, you may ask the Management Committee to consider, or reconsider, your complaint. You should explain as clearly as possible why you believe the initial response to your complaint to be unsatisfactory. You may expect to receive a further response after the next meeting of the Management Committee.

7. Complaining to an outside body

If you are still not satisfied, or if you consider that the problem is sufficiently serious, you may complain to a representative of one of the bodies funding the operation of the First Stop Centre. Details of such representatives, and how to contact them, may be obtained from the Secretary of the Management Committee (see Visitors' Information Sheet). Funding bodies will liaise with the Management Committee in dealing with such complaints.