

Complaints Policy



Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind (IGDB) is committed to dealing with all complaints in relation to services, service delivery, staff, volunteers and service users in a timely, transparent and professional manner.

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind accepts complaints when it is claimed that our activities have not accorded with fair or sound administrative practice and adversely affect the person by whom or on whose behalf the complaint is made.

Complaints are accepted from:

- Any person who has received or sought services from our organisation;
- Any person who legally has the care of the affairs of that person;
- Any legal representative of the person;
- Any other person with the consent of the person;
- If a person is entitled to make a complaint but is unable to do so because of age, illness or disability, the complaint may be made on that person's behalf by a close relative or carer of the person (parent, guardian, son, daughter or spouse or is cohabiting with the person);
- Any person who is engaged with the organisation as a volunteer, member, benefactor or supporter;
- A member of the public.

If complaints relate to the care of a child or vulnerable persons, your complaint may be referred by the Organisation to TUSLA. Alternatively, in this case, you may make a complaint directly to the office of the confidential recipient for vulnerable persons - <https://www2.hse.ie/services/hse-complaints-and-feedback/report-a-concern-about-a-vulnerable-adult-in-care-to-the-confidential-recipient.html>

All complainants have a right to appoint an advocate to assist them in making their complaint and to support them in any subsequent processes in the management of that complaint.

Any form of advocacy used must be agreeable to both the complainant and Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Complaints Officer

In the first instance, your complaint will be dealt with by our Complaints Officer. Please give us as much information as possible and let us know how you would like us to respond to you, providing relevant contact details.

Mel Conway

Complaints Officer
Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind,
National Training Centre and Headquarters,
Model Farm Road,
Cork

Tel: 021 4878200

Email: melconway@guidedogs.ie

How to Make a Complaint

Complaints may be made by letter, by email or verbally, in face-to-face or telephone communication. Verbal complaints may be received by Staff member/Service Manager or Complaints Officer. When making a complaint, please include details such as:

- Who was involved;
- What happened, when and where;
- What your concerns are;
- Have you done anything to resolve this matter;
- What you want to happen now;
- Any other relevant information / documents.

When made, the person will:

- Listen, Empathise, Acknowledge, Identify any multiple issues;
- Confirm the details of the complaint with the complainant;
- Identify what outcome the complainant would wish to result from their complaint;
- Recipient of complaint determines the appropriate management of the complaint;
- A complaint form will be completed and where possible this will be signed by the complainant;
- A copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the Complaints Officer who will maintain a record of all complaints.

Please note that the Organisation may contact the complainant again via telephone, or request to meet him/her, to gather further information related to the complaint.

Anonymous Complaints

Complainants must provide contact details to enable appropriate validation, follow up and investigation of that complaint - unless there is a good and sufficient reason for withholding this information.

If the complaint is made by phone, or in person, the member of staff taking the complaint should encourage the complainant to provide a name and telephone number at which they may be contacted.

All anonymous complaints, both written and verbal, should be brought to the attention of the relevant line manager for a decision as to whether further action is needed.

Time Limit for Complaints

- A complaint must be made within 12 months of the date of the action giving rise to the complaint or within 12 months of the complainant becoming aware of the action giving rise to the complaint;
- The IGDB Complaints Officer may extend the time limit for making a complaint if in the opinion of the Complaints Officer special circumstances make it appropriate to do so. The Complaints Officer must give decision of extending/not extending the time allowed in writing to the complainant within 5 working days of making decision.

Timeframes for Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's Response

- In the case of a verbal complaint a verbal response should be issued as soon as is practically possible and definitely within a 24 hour period;
- For written complaints: written acknowledgement by the Complaints Officer to be made within 5 working days and investigation to be carried out within 30 working days of the acknowledgement date;
- Complaints Officer to update the complainant every 20 working days if investigation exceeds 30 days;
- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind must endeavour to conclude the investigation of complaints within 3 months of the receipt of the complaint.

Matters Excluded

The following matters are excluded from investigation under the complaints policy:

- A matter that is or has been the subject of legal proceedings before a court or tribunal;
- A matter relating to staff recruitment and selection;
- A matter relating to or affecting the terms or conditions of a contract of employment;
- A matter that could prejudice an investigation being undertaken by the Garda Síochána.

Reporting

All staff must report the complaint on receipt to the Complaints Officer using the appropriate reporting documentation.

The Complaints Officer will provide the General Manager with ongoing reports on the number and status of complaints received.

The General Manager will provide the Officers of the Board of Directors with a monthly report detailing:

- The total number of complaints received;
- The nature of the complaints;
- The number of complaints resolved by informal means;
- The outcome of any investigations into the complaints.

If requested by (and agreed with) the Health Services Executive an annual report in relation to complaints received and the status of such complaints will be made available.

Procedures for the Management of Complaints

STAGE 1	-	Local Resolution at the Point of Contact (<i>This is the preferred option</i>)
STAGE 2a	-	Informal Resolution
STAGE 2b	-	Formal Investigation & Outcome
STAGE 3	-	Appeal to Review Officer (<i>A member of the Officers of the Board of Directors</i>)
STAGE 4	-	Appeal to Ombudsman

I. Local Resolution at Point of Contact (Stage 1)

- Listen;
- Identify Issues;
- Sympathise / Empathise / Apologise;
- Thank the person;
- Explain options;
- Take appropriate actions.

II. Informal Resolution (Stage 2a)

- Advise complainant to make a written complaint or staff member completes the IGDB complaints documentation on behalf of the complainant;
- Documentation is passed to the Complaints Officer;
- Complaints Officer will acknowledge written complaint and investigate informally.

III. Formal Investigation & Outcome (Stage 2b)

Complaints Officer carries out a formal investigation and generates a report containing conclusions and recommendations. During the investigation:

- Complaints Officer to consider if informal resolution would be appropriate;
- If successful – complaint resolved;
- If not successful, complaint will be investigated;
- Complaint may be investigated by the same Complaints Officer unless objected to by the complainant;
- Complaints Officer may request such documents and communicate with any persons he/she reasonably believes can assist with the investigation of the complaint;
- Confidentiality and Privacy: A Complaints Officer may not make a finding or a criticism adverse to a person without affording them the opportunity to make representations;
- Complaints Officer will investigate complaints on one occasion only;
- Complaints Officer to make a finding that the complaint is:
 - a) Upheld in whole / in part, or
 - b) Not upheld;
- The Complaints Officer may make recommendations to the appropriate Senior Manager and/or the General Manager;
- Complaints Officer to prepare a report on the investigation at conclusion or at any stage at the request of the Chief Executive or officer of the Board of Directors;
- Complainant may make written representations in support of the complaint and these must be considered by the Complaints Officer;
- The outcomes of the investigation will be communicated in the form of a report by the Complaints Officer to the complainant, the appropriate Senior Manager and/or the Chief Executive.

The General manager will, within 30 working days, inform the complainant and the Complaints Officer of the steps being taken regarding the recommendations or if the recommendation is being amended or rejected and the reasons for it. Please note that implementation of a recommendation may be suspended pending a review.

IV. Appeal to Review Officer (Stage 3)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he/she may appeal to a Review Officer (A member of the Officers of Board of Directors). In this case:

- Review Officer may obtain any required information from the complainant – or may invalidate the complaint;
- Complainant notified of the details of the Review Officer dealing with the complaint within 10 working days of the application being received;
- Review carried out within 20 working days of request being received. Time may be extended where required;
- Review Officer to prepare a signed and dated report on the review and forward it to the Complainant, the Complaints Officer who investigated the complaint, and the General Manager/Senior Manager(s).
- Review Officer may:
 - a) Uphold the original recommendation;
 - b) Vary it or make a new recommendation;
- Review Officer to provide reasons for the above and will within 30 working days, inform the complainant, the Complaints Officer General Manager/Senior Manager(s) of the steps being taken or if the recommendation is being amended or rejected and the reasons for it;

- Recommendations of the review officer are implemented by the General Manager/ Senior Manager;
- Board of Directors are informed of the impact of recommendations on operational effectiveness etc.

V. Appeal to Ombudsman (Stage 4)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal by the Review Officer, he/she may request an external review from the Ombudsman or the Ombudsman for Children.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Complaints Policy

A monthly complaints report will be prepared by the General Manager for review by the Officers of the Board of Directors while a quarterly complaints report will be issued to the HSE. The Board of Directors will review the complaint policies and procedures on an annual basis.