**Complaints Policy**

Support After Rape & Sexual Violence Leeds (SARSVL) is committed to providing the best possible service to the individuals we work with.

We acknowledge, however, that there will be occasions when people might not be happy with some aspect of our provision.

This policy is intended to make it easier for you to tell us when you are dissatisfied with the service you receive from us, or indeed when you have any comment you wish to make about SARSVL.

All complaints will be taken seriously and we aim to treat you with respect and consideration throughout the complaints process.

# What kind of circumstances may give rise to a complaint?

Some examples of reasons you might want to complain are:

* You believe you have been treated unfairly because of your race, religion, age, disability, sexuality, gender identify, marital / civil partnership status. This list is not exhaustive.
* You believe you have been treated unfairly because of your nationality, immigration status or socio-economic status. This list is not exhaustive.
* You feel that we have failed to provide appropriate information to our service users about the organisation or our services;
* You feel that we have failed to provide an important service;
* You feel you have experienced an unreasonable delay in receiving a service;
* You feel that a service provided has been inadequate;
* You feel that one of our volunteers or paid workers has behaved inappropriately or unethically;
* You believe that our volunteers or paid workers have been rude or unhelpful;
* You disagree with a decision we have made or a policy we operate.

You can make a complaint by completing a Complaints Form (available on our premises or by request from info@sarsvl.org.uk) and posting it in our on site suggestions box, by emailing us at feedback@sarsvl.org.uk or by writing to us at SARSVL PO BOX 827 Leeds LS1 9PN.

**Complaints Procedure**

# What should I do to complain informally?

You can make your complaint to the volunteer or paid worker concerned, or to another volunteer or paid worker. Anyone at SARSVL will be pleased to tell you who is the most appropriate person to approach about your specific complaint.

We will invite you to explain your concerns or complaints and to let us know the outcome you might be hoping for. You may like to bring a friend or relative to accompany you if you choose to complain in person, or else you might prefer to telephone or e-mail us.

We aim to listen to what you have to say, to apologise whenever necessary, and to try to agree a solution with you. We will try to deal with an informal complaint to your satisfaction straight away; however, there will be occasions when this may not be possible (for example, during holiday periods). If there will be a delay in responding to your complaint you will be told as quickly as possible. If you remain dissatisfied with us or with our response, you should use the formal procedure outlined below.

# What should I do to make a formal complaint?

You may use our formal complaints procedure at any time. You do not have to complain informally first if you believe that your complaint is too serious for that approach.

Attached to this policy is a basic form, which you may use to make your complaint. If you would prefer, you may write a letter instead. Our contact details for formal complaints can be found on that form. You should then post your complaint to SARSVL, marking the envelope clearly “Private and Confidential”. Alternatively, you can return complaints forms or formal complaint letters as an attachment to an e-mail, with “Private and Confidential” written in the subject box. Unfortunately though, we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of complaints sent electronically. You can also find these forms in our reception and put them in the suggestions box provided.

# What will happen after I make a formal complaint?

SARSVL will acknowledge receipt of your formal complaint within five working days. This will be done by letter or e-mail, depending on the contact method you’ve indicated you would prefer. This letter or e-mail will also tell you what steps will be taken to investigate your complaint.

We aim to resolve all complaints quickly and to keep you informed throughout the process. You will receive a full written response usually within 10 working days, including details of any action we intend to take as a result of your complaint. If there is likely to be any delay to our response, you will be informed in advance.

# What if I am still unhappy – can I appeal?

If the issue is not resolved, you should write to the Board of Trustees within 10 working days of the receipt of the response to your complaint (unless there are unavoidable circumstances that result in a delay, which we need to be informed of) and ask to move to the next stage of the procedure. You cannot progress to the appeal stage unless you have used this formal procedure.

# What will happen if I appeal?

A Trustee will acknowledge your complaint within 10 working days (unless there are unavoidable circumstances that result in a delay, which you will be informed of) and will arrange a hearing before members of the Board of Trustees who have not previously been involved with the complaint or the service about which you have complained (usually three members). You may attend this meeting, bringing a friend or relative with you if you choose. You may make written comments instead if you would prefer.

If the complaint involves anybody else in particular, they will also be invited to present their version of events and response to any complaint. They may also have someone to accompany them.

This hearing will be arranged as soon as possible and within 30 working days. Your appeal and the original complaint will be considered in detail. Any conclusions will be communicated to the Board of Trustees, who will then reach a decision and agree any actions to be taken.

A member of the panel will write to you giving you their decisions and any proposed actions within 20 working days of the Board meeting which makes these decisions. SARSVL will make every effort to comply with the decision or recommendations of the appeal panel.

# What happens if I wish to withdraw my complaint?

Only the person who has made a complaint may withdraw that complaint before resolution or completion of the complaints process. You may do so at any time by letter or by e-mail. You may also do so via telephone, but your call should be followed by confirmation in writing (i.e. letter or e-mail).

You will be asked for your reasons for closing or retracting your complaint, but you are not obliged to supply this information if you would prefer not to. You will receive a written acknowledgement of the termination of the complaint.

# Will my complaint be confidential?

Your complaint may be seen by more than one volunteer, paid worker or Trustee for SARSVL as part of the investigation and/or appeals process but we will make every effort to safeguard your privacy. Your complaint will not be discussed widely throughout SARSVL, or with anyone outside of SARSVL, unless you want it to be and request us to do so.

You should be aware, however, that if your complaint is specifically about one or more particular volunteer, paid worker or Trustee, it will be necessary for that person or people to be told that a complaint has been lodged against her or them, in order for an investigation to take place. They will also be given the details of the complaint to allow them to respond.

We can withhold your name from the individuals about whom you’ve complained on your request but it might be possible for them to figure out your identity through the details of the complaint.

**Outcome**

Where appropriate, the outcome of any complaint will be communicated to any individuals who were the subject of the complaint within 20 working days.

Policy last reviewed and ratified by SARSVL Board: July 2019

**Formal SARSVL Complaints Form**

**Your name: ……………………………………………………………………………………………..**

**Your postal address: ………………………………………………………………………………….**

**……………………………………………………………………………………………………………..**

**Postcode: ……………..**

**Your Phone Number: ……………………………………………………..**

**Your e-mail address: ………………………………………………………………………………….**

*Please only provide contact details you are happy for us to use to get in touch with you about your complaint.*

**Please also let us know if there is a way you would prefer to be contacted e.g. by e-mail or post:**

**Email: YES/NO Post: YES/NO**

**What is your complaint?** *Please give as much detail as you can, including dates and names of people involved, if relevant. You can continue on an extra sheet if necessary.*

**Ideally, what would you like us to do about this issue?** *Please continue on an extra sheet if necessary.*

**Your signature……………………………………….. Today’s date …………………………**

**Please put this form in the box provided on our premises, or send it to SARSVL at PO Box 827 Leeds LS1 9PN or as an attachment to an email at** **feedback@sarsvl.org.uk****.**

**Please be aware that we cannot guarantee the security of complaints sent via e-mail.**