



# North Tyneside LINK: Complaints and resolution of disputes procedure May 2011

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 North Tyneside LINK is committed to ensuring high standards of conduct and performance in all aspects of its work. Consequently the organisation takes any complaints made about its Members or Staff Team, when carrying out duties on behalf of the organisation, very seriously.
- 1.2 If it is felt that a complaint should be made about the conduct or performance of a LINK member or Staff member, the following procedure will be followed.

## **2. Complaint against a staff member**

- 2.1 The complaint should be put in writing, marked "Confidential", and sent to the Chief Executive at VODA's registered address.
- 2.2 Within 15 working days (Monday – Friday) of receipt of the complaint the Chief Executive with an independent witness will interview separately the complainant and employee concerned. An investigation of any evidence will be made and a written report produced within 28 days. Should the complaint be unfounded the Chief Executive will inform both parties of the decision.
- 2.3 Where the complaint is upheld the Chief Executive will discuss appropriate action with the employee. If necessary, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with VODA's Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure. The complainant will be notified in writing of the decision and offered an apology.
- 2.4 The Chief Executive will notify the Chairperson of the complaint and action taken.

## **3. Complaint against a LINK member**

- 3.1 If the complaint is against a LINK Member, then the complaint should be put in writing, marked "Confidential", and sent to the LINK Manager at VODA's registered address.
- 3.2 On receipt of the complaint the LINK Manager and the LINK Chairperson will arrange to meet the complainant and LINK member concerned separately within 15 working days (Monday – Friday). The facts will be recorded in writing.
- 3.3 The LINK Manager and LINK Chairperson will investigate any evidence and reach a decision and make a written report within 28 days.

- 3.4 Should the complaint be unfounded the LINK Manager will inform both parties of the decision. Where the complaint is upheld the LINK Manager will discuss appropriate action with the LINK Chairperson.
- 3.5 A report outlining action taken, but not the detail of the complaint, will be submitted to the next LINK Board meeting.

## **4 Enter and view complaints**

- 4.1 If a service visited by LINK authorised representatives wishes to make a complaint against an authorised representative they can do so by putting their complaint in writing, marking it 'confidential' and sending it to the LINK Manager. The complaint will be handled following the procedure set out in paragraph 3.

## **5 Complaints against the Chair**

- 5.1 If a complaint is made against the Chair the procedure in paragraph 3 will be followed. In this instance the LINK Manager will work with the Chief Executive of the host organisation (VODA) to investigate the complaint.

## **6. Resolution of disputes**

- 6.1 It is the intention of LINK to deal with grievances effectively and speedily. It is also the intention as far as possible to settle disputes informally. Therefore, before the following formal procedure is invoked, informal discussions will normally take place as soon as possible between the member of the LINK and the LINK Manager. Members should make it clear they are unhappy regarding a specific matter and request a meeting with the LINK Manager. The LINK Manager should initially meet with the LINK Member within 3 working days and reply to the grievance verbally. The LINK Manager should ascertain whether they wish to invoke the formal Grievance Procedure.

## **7. Formal procedure**

- 7.1 Members will lodge their grievance, in writing, with the LINK Manager.
- 7.2 The Member will meet with the LINK Manager as soon as possible after the grievance is lodged (normally within five working days). The LINK Manager's decision will be given to the Member verbally and in writing within 10 working days or as soon as possible if advice needs to be taken.

**(If the Member has already had informal discussions and met with the LINK Manager or if the LINK Manager is the subject of the grievance, Stage 7.2 may be omitted.)**

- 7.3 If the grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved the LINK Member may lodge an appeal within 5 days. The LINK Manager will assemble an Appeal Panel within 10 working days consisting of the LINK Manager and three Board members. The LINK Member will be given at least three days written notice of this meeting. The

LINK Member will be given the opportunity to state her/his case. The LINK Manager will normally be present unless the grievance is against him or her in which case she/he may only be called upon to give evidence. Both sides may ask for an independent person with appropriate expertise to be present at such a meeting to assist them with discussions.

- 7.4 The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final.
- 7.5 All decisions arising from formal meetings shall be recorded in writing.
- 7.6 A report on all formal grievances will be submitted to the Board when the grievance procedure has been concluded.
- 7.7 No mechanical or electronic recording devices will be permitted during the grievance and appeal hearings.
- 7.8 All documentation will be marked 'Confidential'.

## **8. Review**

- 8.1 This document will be reviewed by April 2012.

**LINK Manager**  
**May 2011**