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NORTHERN RIVERS

Complaints Policy

Purpose This policy acknowledges the importance of feedback, including both compliments and complaints, as a vital component of RDA-NR's continuous improvement process. It outlines the principles and procedures for effectively managing and responding to complaints.

1. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether written or verbal, regarding the standard of service, actions, or inactions by RDA-NR or its staff. Complaints can be made by individuals, groups, or organisations. This policy does not apply to dissatisfaction with decisions made by RDA-NR that are subject to formal appeals processes, such as regional certification decisions.

2. Types of Complaints

RDA-NR recognises that complaints can vary in severity and nature. Some may require formal investigation, while others may be more appropriately addressed through informal channels.

3. Guiding Principles

RDA-NR will adhere to the following principles in managing complaints:

- **Thoroughness and Fairness:** All complaints will be investigated thoroughly, fairly, and without bias.
- **Confidentiality:** Complaints will be treated confidentially, except when disclosure is necessary to address safety concerns or comply with legal obligations.
- **Right to Appeal:** Complainants have the right to appeal if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

4. Commitment to Quality

RDA-NR is committed to delivering high-quality services. The complaints procedure enables us to respond effectively to concerns, identify areas for improvement, and enhance our services based on feedback.

5. Complaints Procedure

Who Can Make a Complaint? This procedure is open to members of the public, stakeholders, and associated organisations who have received a service from RDA-NR. For staff complaints, please refer to the Human Resources: Grievance Policy.

Complaint Resolution Process The complaint resolution process consists of three stages:

- **Stage One - Informal Complaint or Comment:**
 - Suitable for minor issues or feedback not requiring a formal response.
 - Can be submitted via phone, email, or in person.
 - Will be recorded and reviewed for service improvement.
- **Stage Two - Formal Complaint:**
 - Suitable for more serious issues requiring investigation and a formal response.
 - Must be submitted in writing (email or letter).
 - Will be acknowledged within 3 business days.
 - A full response will be provided within 15 business days.
- **Stage Three - Appeal:**
 - If dissatisfied with the Stage Two response, the complainant may appeal.
 - Must be submitted in writing within 7 business days of receiving the Stage Two response.
 - Will be reviewed by an independent Appeals Panel as appointed by RDA-NR Board.
 - A final decision will be communicated within 20 business days.

Timeframes

- **Acknowledgment of Formal Complaints:** Within 3 business days.
- **Full Response to Formal Complaints:** Within 15 business days.
- **Appeal Decisions:** Within 20 business days.

If these timeframes cannot be met due to the complexity of the case or unforeseen circumstances, the complainant will be informed in writing with an explanation and a new estimated timeframe.

5. Accessibility and Support

RDA-NR is committed to making our complaints process accessible to all. We offer:

- Multiple channels for submitting complaints (online, email, phone, letter).
- Assistance in documenting complaints for those who require it.
- Access to interpreters or translation services as needed.
- Information in alternative formats upon request.

6. Continuous Improvement

All complaints will be logged and regularly analysed to identify trends and systemic issues. This information will be used to improve our services and processes.

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and aligned with best practices.

- **Last Review Date:** September 2024
- **Next Review Date:** September 2025
- **Responsibility:** RDA-NR Board

Previous Version: October 2014