

SPECIALISTERNE IRELAND

Specialisterne Ireland is a not-for-profit organisation that recruits and supports talented individuals with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. It is an innovative social business concept originally founded in Denmark in 2004. Specialisterne is internationally recognised as the first and foremost example of how individuals on the Autistic Spectrum can be included and realise their potential in meaningful and productive jobs.

SPECIALISTERNE Ireland 

Complaints Policy and Procedure

1.0 Policy Statement

It is important that Specialisterne Ireland hears the experiences of those receiving services and those who are affected by how Specialisterne Ireland provides these services. Facilitating a complaints procedure allows Specialisterne Ireland to hear these experiences.

The emphasis of this policy is on resolve not blame.

Specialisterne Ireland are committed to:

- Giving candidates (and any other individuals affected by Specialisterne Ireland services) the opportunity to express their views about services in a means that is both safe and inclusive;
- Facilitate candidates (and any other individuals affected by Specialisterne Ireland services) to express their views;
- Listen to these views;
- Act on these views as appropriate;
- Respond to those who make complaints and keep them informed of the actions Specialisterne Ireland takes in respect to their complaint.

2.0 Roles and Responsibilities

This policy is for implementation by all staff members in Specialisterne Ireland.

Specialisterne Ireland has committed to having a dedicated Complaints Officer and Review Officer to effectively deal with all complaints.

3.0 Complaints

3.1 Definition:

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about an organisations action or lack of action – an action that does not represent fair or sound administrative practice if it is;

- Taken without proper permission or authority,
- Taken for unnecessary reasons,
- The result of negligence or carelessness,
- Based on incorrect or incomplete information,
- Discriminatory

3.2 Principles:

The following principles underpin Specialisterne Ireland's approach to receiving complaints:



- Specialisterne Ireland will be guided by Quality Authority's national standards and the Office of the Ombudsman's "Guide to Standards of Best Practice";
- Complaints will be utilised to inform decision-making, future planning, design and delivery of Specialisterne Ireland's services as appropriate;
- Complaints are essential to the organisations continued learning and future development;
- Individuals who engage in Specialisterne Ireland services will be informed and reminded of the complaints procedure and how to avail of this process;
- Specialisterne Ireland will resolve complaints as promptly as practicable;
- Specialisterne Ireland staff will actively support, assist and advise, as appropriate, individuals who wish to make a complaint;
- All individuals making a complaint will be treated with the dignity and respect;
- Making a complaint will in no way negatively impact the service an individual receives from Specialisterne Ireland.

3.3 Approach

Specialisterne Ireland aim to resolve complaints as promptly as possible at local level without having to further escalate the matter to the Complaints Officer.

Specialisterne Ireland staff are expected to deal with complaints by either;

- Resolving the complaint, or;
- Referring the complaint to the most appropriate individual, or
- Forwarding the complaint on to the Complaints Officer.

Complaints will be acknowledged initially from the point of contact and any staff members named in a complaint will be advised of the details surrounding the complaint.

All complaints will be acknowledged in a promptly manner and complainants will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days.

In situations where complaints cannot be resolved locally, they will be referred to the Complaints Officer.

3.4 Who can complain?

Any individual who is receiving, or has received or has sought or requested a service from Specialisterne Ireland (or from a service provider providing a service on behalf of an individual), or individuals, other than the above mentioned, who claim to be or have been unfavourably affected by action or lack of action by Specialisterne Ireland.



Specialisterne Ireland are unable to investigate any complaints made by a third party, without the consent of the individual who it is claimed has been unfavourably affected.

If an individual who is entitled to make a complaint lacks the capacity to do so or is unable to do so because of age, illness or disability, the complaint may be made on the individual's behalf by:

- A close relative or carer of the individual;
- Any individual who, by law or by appointment of a court, has the care of the affairs of the individual;
- Any legal representative of the individual;
- Any other person with consent of the individual.

3.5 How is a complaint made?

Complaints can be accepted by Specialisterne Ireland staff in a number of ways:

- Verbally, by telephone, mobile phone or in person;
- By e-mail
- In writing

Any individual who enquires about making a complaint to Specialisterne Ireland will be advised and assisted by staff, as appropriate.

3.6 Time Limits

A complaint must be made within 12 months of:

- The date of the action or inaction giving rise to the complaint or,
- The date of the complainant becoming aware of the action or inaction giving rise to the complaint.

3.7 Matters Excluded

There are some types of complaints that Specialisterne Ireland are excluded from dealing with under the Complaint Policy. These include;

- A matter that is or has been subject to legal proceedings;
- A matter relating solely to the exercise of clinical judgement;
- An action taken solely on advice of an individual exercising clinical judgement;
- A matter that could prejudice an investigation being taken by An Garda Síochána;
- A matter that has been brought before any other complaints procedure established by law;

- A matter that gives rise to child protection or welfare concerns (these concerns must be referred to appropriate or relevant external agencies)

3.8 Stages of the Complaints Process

There are 4 stages to the complaints process;

1. Local Resolution
2. Referral to Complaints Officer
3. Internal Review
4. External Review

A complaint may be resolved at any of the above stages. When a complainant is unhappy with the resolution being offered, they can decide to escalate their complaint to the next stage of the complaints process.

3.8.1 Local Resolution

Local resolution is where Specialisterne Ireland staff try to resolve any issues raised by the complainant as promptly as possible. Specialisterne Ireland staff will utilise this policy to try and resolve any issues raised. Complainants will be advised and reminded that they have the right to have their complaint referred to the Complaints Officer if they are dissatisfied with the local resolution being offered. The complaint and the proposed resolution will be recorded and entered onto Specialisterne Ireland's complaint database.

3.8.2 Referral to Complaints Officer

A complaints officer will examine a complaint and decide if the complaint can be dealt with under Specialisterne Ireland's Complaint Policy. The complaints officer will advise relevant staff of the complaint and nature of the complaint received. The complaints officer will not be permitted to manage a complaint in which they have had either direct or indirect involvement. The complaints officer will have a number of options for dealing with a complain

- Referral for local resolution (provided this option has not been already availed of);
- Informal resolution;
- Mediation;
- Investigation.

3.8.3 Internal Review

When a complainant requests a review of recommendations a review officer will be nominated. The review officer will establish if the request for a review can be dealt with under the review procedure and will conduct the review accordingly. The

review process may require a fresh examination of any documents, files and papers trails together with fresh interviews with relevant parties to the complaint.

3.8.4 External Review

When a complainant requests an external review a nominated staff member from within Specialisterne Ireland will contact and liaise with the relevant office, agency or organisation.