



THE SOCIAL WORKERS UNION

COMPLIMENTS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Social Workers Union (SWU) is an independent Trade Union exclusively for social workers. All our TU Officials (TUO) and Trade Union Advisors (TUA) are qualified, registered and experienced social workers and are employed by BASW
- 1.2 SWU aims to provide high quality support, advice and representation to all of our members at all times.
- 1.3 The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that our members are aware of the steps they can take if they have cause to note a concern regarding SWU membership, make a complaint or wish to formally register a compliment about any individual staff member or any aspect of the service they receive. It is also to inform members of the response they will receive, an assurance that all communications will be taken seriously and dealt with in accordance with the procedure.
- 1.4 SWU embraces the principals of on-going learning and development. As such we endeavour to learn from complaints as well as compliments we receive relating to our service. This learning is essential when it is apparent that it will be beneficial to the effective running of the Union and ultimately to the service we provide to members. In such circumstances we will seek to incorporate any learning to improve the service we deliver and meet the expectations of our members.
- 1.5 SWU adheres to GDPR principles and the terms and conditions of GDPR. As such any breaches of GDPR will be followed up accordingly.

2.0 Scope of this procedure

- 2.1 As already stated SWU aims to provide high quality support, advice and representation to all of our members at all times. All employed staff members of SWU come under the remit of this procedure.
- 2.2 SWU Union Contacts are not employees of SWU and therefore cannot formally fall under the complaint section of this policy. If you view the conduct of a SWU Union Contact to be in question, you are able to write formally to the General Secretary who will undertake an informal investigation and report any findings to any relevant other. If SWU Union Contacts are found to be in breach of either SWU rules or BASW codes of ethics we may decide to refer the matter for further consideration to the SWU Executive. In these circumstances serious consideration may be given to withdrawing their services. Contracts with Union Contacts are not legally binding and can be withdrawn at any time at the discretion of SWU Chair and SWU General Secretary.
- 2.3 In the event you wish to raise a concern or make a formal complaint about the Senior Trade Union official, the matter should be referred in the first instance to the Manager of the Advice and Representation Team.
 - (a) Concerns or complaints about the Assistant General Secretary should be referred in the first instance to the General Secretary and concerns and Complaints about the General Secretary should be sent to the Chair of SWU.

- 2.4 We acknowledge that some members will be unhappy with the terms and references (T&R's) of the SWU. However, the terms of our service is determined by the SWU Executive and SWU Rules (and BASW Council for the A&R Service). Therefore, members are unable to instigate this procedure regarding T&R's.
- 2.5 Lawyers are commissioned to provide legal assessments of relevant SWU Advice and Representation cases; their assessment is **final**. Some members may choose to obtain a second legal opinion, however, this does not affect the initial assessment of the legal advisor and we are not bound to either receive or rely on any external advice therein.

3.0. Our Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping relevant people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;

4.0 How to register a compliment

- 4.1 To assist us in providing the best possible service to our members we welcome your comments.
- 4.2 All of the Officials and Staff of SWU constantly endeavour to deliver a top quality service to our members. Where a member believes they have received a service from any Official or staff member that is worthy of particular mention, they are at liberty to pass their comments onto SWU.
- 4.3 Should you wish to register a compliment then please email your comments to the General Secretary at SWU or email SWU Chair via SWU Admin Manager: joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk
- 4.4 We will endeavour to acknowledge your comments and will ensure that any affected staff member receives your feedback.
- 4.5 Any feedback may be placed anonymously on our website or marketing publications. We will always seek the permission of members prior to doing so.

5.0 How to make a complaint

There are four stages or levels in this procedure and we would encourage wherever possible, complaints are dealt with at the informal stage.

5.1 STAGE 1 – Informal resolution – Concern

If you wish to register a concern either verbally or by email this will be dealt with informally and members are encouraged to make contact with the person concerned. The formal procedures set out below will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue informally are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

6.0 STAGE 2 – Formal Resolution

- 6.1 This involves making a formal complaint to the General Secretary in writing via the SWU Admin Manager: joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk (please mark the email 'Private and Confidential'). We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 working days from the date it is received. If the complaint is regarding the General Secretary then the above process applies however complaints should be addressed to the SWU Chair via the SWU Admin email address. If the complaint pertains to an Executive role; It will be necessary for the complainant to

temporary stand down as an Executive Member until the complaint is concluded. If the complaint pertains to Chair and General Secretary, then the complaint process will be led by an elected SWU Hon Officer.

- 6.2 Any formal complaint should, where possible, be made within 28 days of either the incident taking place or the attempt to resolve the matter informally (if applicable) has proven to have failed. This will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to recall the incident clearly and any supporting documentation is relevant and readily available.
- 6.3 Please include as much information as possible in your written complaint and indicate if attempts have been made to resolve the issue and the outcome of any such attempts. We will make every effort to resolve the complaint as expediently as possible, but under normal circumstance no later than 28 days from receiving the complaint.
- 6.4 It will, on occasions be necessary to contact the complainant to seek clarification on the issues raised.
- 6.5 If for any reason it is not possible to meet the 28 day commitment due to the complexities of the case or other extenuating circumstances, we will contact the complainant with an update and provide an estimate of the timeline necessary to reach a conclusion. It would also be helpful at this stage if the complainant were to indicate the outcome they are seeking.
- 6.6 At the conclusion of the investigation the complainant will be notified in writing and via email of the outcome and what, if any, action will be taken. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome they can proceed to Stage 3. This must be done within 14 days of receiving the decision from the General Secretary or SWU Chair

7.0 STAGE 3 – Appeal

- 7.1 If the complainant is dissatisfied at the outcome at Stage 2 they can request that the decision is reviewed and can put their complaint before the General Secretary or SWU Chair for further consideration. All stage 3 complaints should be emailed to SWU Admin Manager and marked as ‘Private and Confidential). If a complaint is against the General Secretary, the this should be addressed to the SWU Chair via the SWU Admin Manager.
- 7.2 The complainant should give the reasons for their dissatisfaction and again the outcome they are seeking. This must be done within 14 days of receiving the decision from the General Secretary or SWU Chair . The General Secretary or SWU Chair will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, where possible, within 5 working days. The General Secretary or SWU Chair will investigate and inform the complainant of the outcome as quickly as possible. This would normally be within 28 days. The GS or SWU Chair may need to contact the complainant to seek clarification on the issues raised. This must be done within 14 days of receiving the decision from the General Secretary or SWU Chair
- 7.3 If there is a delay for any reason, the complainant will be informed and advised of when they can expect to receive the outcome. If, following Stage 2 the issues have not been resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction, an appeal the decision with the General Secretary or SWU Chair at Stage 3.

8.0 STAGE 4 – Panel Consideration – This is the final stage in the procedure

- 8.1 A complainant who remains dissatisfied after having gone through the previous stages can lodge an appeal with the General Secretary of SWU or SWU Chair. This will be heard by either the GS or Chair of the Union, together with two nominated members of the SWU Executive Committee (Hon Officers) or if necessary, to appoint a complaints panel. The appeal must be lodged within 10 working days of receipt of the decision of the GS or SWU Chair . The GS or Chair will acknowledge receipt of the appeal, where possible, within 5 working days.
- 8.2 The complaint will be considered with all of the information (available) before them, and they will endeavour to reach a conclusion within 28 days. In the event of any delays the complainant will be informed and given the estimated timeline necessary to complete the appeal process.
- 8.3 The decision at stage 4 is final and there is no further recourse within SWU.

9.0 Monitoring, evaluation and review

9.1 The SWU Executive Committee will review this policy at least every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

Adopted by SWU on June 16th,2021

First Review date 1st May 2023

Amended 9th June 2025 (Full Executive agreement)

Next review date 9th June 2027