

Guidelines for Managing Complaints

POLICY STATEMENT

HBLN and Event Organiser(s) are committed to ensuring that any person using HBLN services or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision of the organisation and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

HBLN will provide a complaints and appeals management procedure that:

- is simple and easy to use
- is effectively communicated and promoted to all members/event participants
- ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice
- complies with legislative requirements.

PRINCIPLES

HBLN and Event Organiser(s) will:

- consider all complaints received
- treat all complainants with respect, recognising that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant
- maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution
- resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
- deal with all complaints in a timely manner
- keep parties to the complaint informed of progress of the complaint
- ensure that HBLN members, event participants and volunteers are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing feedback and complaints.
- ensure all members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures
- ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from participating in activities during the progress of an issue.
- ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning improvements.

PROCEDURES

Information for members and volunteers

The HBLN complaints and appeals procedure will be documented for members/event participants and volunteers in Lodging Complaints documentation which is made available when initially registering for an event or activity.

All members/event participants and volunteers will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints and appeals at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the HBLN.

The Lodging Complaints document will contain information on the following:

- how to make a complaint or lodge an appeal
- contact person for lodging a complaint or appeal
- how HBLN will deal with the complaint or appeal, the steps involved and the timelines
- the rights of the complainant to an advocate, support person or interpreter
- how the person will be informed about the outcome of their complaint or appeal
- how to make a complaint to an external body including contact details.

Making a Complaint

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing or verbally to the Event Organiser or the HBLN Coordinator.

If the complaint is about:

- a member/event participant, instructor or volunteer, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Event Organiser(s)
- an Event Organiser(s), the complaint will normally be dealt with by the HBLN Coordinator

Written complaints may be sent to the HBLN Coordinator who will be responsible for responding to the complaint.

Procedure for complaints and appeals management

The person managing the complaint will:

1. Processing the complaint or appeal:

- registering the complaint or appeal in Complaints Folder
- informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame

2. Investigating the complaint or appeal:

- examining the complaint within 14 days of the complaint being received
- investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond
- informing the complainant by letter within 21 days of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution.

As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within 30 days of being received. If this time frame cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

3. Resolving the complaint:

- making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within 30 days of the complaint being received
- informing the complainant of the outcome:
 - upheld (and if so what will be done to resolve it)
 - resolved (and how this has been achieved); or
 - if no further action can be taken, the reasons for this.
- Informing the complainant of any options for further action if required

4. Reviewing the complaint:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint or appeal, they can seek a further review of the matter by the HBLN Committee.

5. Referral to external procedure:

A formal external complaints procedure may follow Step 4 if the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome. The dispute shall be referred to a mutually agreed upon neutral organisation that specialises in outside mediation, the process to be followed until a resolution is secured at the complainants own expense.

Lodging an appeal

Members/event participants or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the Event Organiser(s)/HBLN Coordinator, related to access to activities. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to the HBLN Coordinator and/or the HBLN Committee.

Record keeping

A register of complaints and appeals will be kept in Complaints Folder. The register will be maintained by the HBLN Coordinator and will record the following for each complaint or appeal:

- Details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint
- Date lodged
- Action taken

- Date of resolution and reason for decision
- Indication of complainant being notified of outcome
- Complainant response and any further action

Copies of all correspondence will be kept Complaints Folder

The complaints register and files will be confidential and access is restricted to the HBLN Coordinator and the HBLN Committee.

The Complaints Folder will be reviewed 6 monthly by the HBLN Coordinator with the results used to inform activity planning by including a review of complaints and appeals in all event planning, monitoring and evaluation activities.

Complaints involving Event Organiser(s)

Complaints made against Event Organiser(s) will be managed by the HBLN Coordinator who will:

- notify the Event Organiser(s) of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the Event Organiser(s) with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised
- attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the complainant
- take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against Event Organiser(s) arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in the HBLN Guideline for Managing Discipline.

If the matter remains unresolved, the HBLN Coordinator will raise the matter at the next HBLN Committee meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Committee may:

- deal with the matter at its meeting or
- refer the matter to a mutually agreed upon neutral organisation that specialises in outside mediation, the process to be followed until a resolution is secured at the participants own expense.