

## Ethical Property Foundation Complaints Procedure

### 1. Introduction

The Ethical Property Foundation aims to provide a service of a standard acceptable to all our users. If we fail to do this we want to know about it. This will enable us to not only deal with the specific problem, but also avoid it happening again. This complaints procedure sets out how to take up matters if you think the service you have received from the Ethical Property Foundation is unsatisfactory.

Copies of the Foundation's complaints procedure are available from the Foundation's website, [www.ethicalproperty.org.uk](http://www.ethicalproperty.org.uk) or on request from the Foundation's office.

If you require a copy of the Foundation's complaints procedure in large print, please contact our administrator on 020 7065 0794 / [mail@ethicalproperty.org.uk](mailto:mail@ethicalproperty.org.uk)

This document sets out the procedures the Ethical Property Foundation will follow when we receive a complaint from users of the Property Advice Service. This procedure is meant to provide a means to resolve such complaints.

Complaints are likely to be in one or more of the following areas:

- dissatisfaction with our Service, for example, inadequate work, problems with advice given, unacceptable delay or failure to deliver a service
- discourtesy or unhelpfulness on the part of Ethical Property Foundation staff.

### 2. The Procedure

When a Service user wishes to register a complaint, the following procedure will be adopted.

Where the complaint is against the Director, the same procedure will be followed, but with the Chair of the Board of Trustees substituting for the Director's role at all stages.

### 3. Preliminary Stage

If a user of the Property Advice Service wishes to make a formal complaint this can be done either by completing a Complaints Form, available on request from the Foundation's office, or by making a specific request to make a formal verbal complaint.

### 4. Stage 1

The complainant will be invited to discuss the complaint with the line manager of the staff member who has dealt with the complainant's enquiry to the Property Advice Service. This can be done in person or by telephone, whichever is appropriate. The line manager will keep a record of the conversation on the Foundation's Complaints Monitoring Sheet. The line manager will endeavour to resolve the matter.

Stage 1 will be completed within 5 working days of receiving the complaint when possible.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, or where it is not possible to use Stage 1 (for example if it is not convenient for the complainant to 'phone or visit the office) then refer to Stage 2 below).

## 5. Stage 2

The complainant will be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Director, marked private and confidential, providing as much detail about the complaint as possible. If the complainant is not able to put their complaint in writing the complainant will be offered an interview with the Director or their nominee. The role of the Director or nominee at this meeting will be confined to making a written record of the complaint, obtaining the complainant's approval for the contents of this record, and asking the complainant to sign to indicate they agree with the contents. The complainant may choose to work with a third party, which the complainant is responsible for selecting, at this stage and throughout the process.

The Director will then investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it.

The Director may delegate any aspect of the investigation to a nominee unconnected to the complaint.

If the complaint involves (a) member(s) of staff or Register Member(s) the Director will offer the opportunity for the member of staff to put forward their account, either by written statement or by presenting their case to the Director in a meeting.

The Director will ensure that, where possible, all complainants receive a response in writing within 10 working days of the Complaints Form or written complaint to the Director being received. The Director's written response to the complainant will summarise the findings of the investigation and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter. The Foundation will retain a copy of the Director's written response.

If a response by letter is unsuitable, the complainant will be offered an interview with the Director to provide the response verbally. This interview will be held within 10 working days of the Complaints Form or written complaint to the Director being received. A written record of this interview, signed by the complainant, will be retained by the Foundation.

If the complainant is not satisfied at this stage they should ask for the matter to be dealt with under Stage 3 of the complaints procedure.

## 6. Stage 3

Where the matter is not resolved by Stage 2, the Director should immediately refer the complaint to a panel, constituting two members of the Board of Trustees, sending copies of all written correspondence to panel members. The Chair of Trustees will be responsible for convening the panel. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair will become the convenor. The complainant will be informed immediately by the Chair of Trustees that this is being done and that the panel will also be contacting the staff member(s) or Register member(s) against whom the complaint is made.

The panel will review the decision made at Stage 2 and may seek further clarification from any of the parties involved.

The panel will notify the complainant of its reasons and decision, where possible, within 15 working days of having received notice of the complaint. The panel's decision will be final.

The Chair of Trustees is responsible for ensuring records of the meeting are kept, and retained by the Foundation.

The Chair of Trustees will be responsible for reporting the panel's findings to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees.

#### **7. Recording and Monitoring Complaints**

All complaints will be recorded and kept on file, including those which were resolved without being put in writing. The Complaints Monitoring Form will be used to do this. All complaints shall be treated with regard to the Foundation's Privacy Policy.

The Director will make a report once a year to the Board of Trustees summarising the nature of complaints received and how they were resolved.

#### **8. Publicising and reviewing the Procedure**

Property Advice Service staff are responsible for ensuring that information regarding the Foundation's complaints procedure is available to all Service users. All Trustees will receive a copy of the complaints procedure. Existing and new workers will be introduced to the complaints procedure via induction and training. The complaints procedure will be available on the Ethical Property Foundation's website at all times. The procedure will be reviewed annually and amendments will be proposed and agreed by the Board of Trustees.

If you wish talk to discuss the Foundation's Complaints Procedure please contact the Foundation's Director on 020 7065 0761.