



Leading Lights Accreditation Complaints Policy

This policy covers complaints made by stakeholders of our Leading Lights accredited services made about those services. Complaints may be from clients of services, funders, staff or the general public. SafeLives is not able to investigate complaints made about services that are not leading lights accredited.

SafeLives expects Leading Lights accredited services to deliver services in line with the standards. Accreditation last for three years and services are also required to report annually to Leading lights on any changes at the service and any actions they are working on in relation to the accreditation. This annual return includes a self-assessment of practice standards through case auditing.

Where someone (staff member/ commissioner/client/other) has good reason to believe that an accredited organisation is not working in line with the Leading Lights Standards and they have not been able to resolve their concern through the complaints process provided by the organisation involved, then they can raise their concern with SafeLives.

When SafeLives receives a complaint about an accredited organisation we will respond to this in a timely and effective manner, in line with the following complaints procedure.

It is our policy to take complaints regarding Leading Lights accredited services seriously and to ensure that they are promptly responded to and investigated at an appropriate level (where the complaint is applicable to the standards). We are also committed, whenever possible, to take action to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence of similar problems. The number and outcomes of complaints will be reviewed annually through the leading Lights panel.

SafeLives expects accredited services to provide high quality services in a non-discriminatory way, in line with the standards, the SafeLives Charter and the Leading lights terms and conditions that potential and accredited services will sign.

SafeLives will take breaches of the above seriously. SafeLives reserves the right to revoke accreditation where there is evidence of a breach. This decision will be made by the Internal Accreditation Panel. Appeals will be reviewed by the SafeLives board of Trustees.

The procedures outlined below are intended to be used when an organisation or individual wishes to complain about the conduct or quality of service, of a Leading Lights accredited organisation.

SafeLives will only investigate complaints concerning current accredited services.

Procedure A

In most circumstances a complainant should first follow the internal complaints procedure of the organisation. They can then complain to SafeLives if they are dissatisfied with the process or outcome

of that investigation. However, SafeLives understands that there may be some circumstances where a complainant (for instance if the complainant is a client) may not wish to pursue a complaint directly with an organisation and, therefore, they may ask SafeLives to lodge a complaint to the organisation on their behalf. SafeLives will consider carefully whether or not it can represent the complainant (client). If SafeLives does do this then procedure B will be followed.

Any complaint about a Leading Lights accredited service should be made to SafeLives (see contacts in appendix 1) as soon as possible.

Where a current investigation is ongoing (e.g. internal or external such as an employment tribunal) then SafeLives will not investigate the complaint until these processes are complete.

Anybody wishing to complain about a Leading Lights accredited service should initially contact the Leading Lights Programme Lead in writing (via email, or post) outlining the details of the complaint with copies of all relevant information including the original letter of complaint and the response from the accredited organisation (where there was a response), any further correspondence and the alleged breached organisation's Complaints Policy and Procedures.

If a Leading Lights accredited service does not cooperate with this policy and procedure, SafeLives may revoke their Leading Lights accreditation status.

Upon receipt of a written complaint regarding an accredited organisation, SafeLives will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five working days. This acknowledgement will outline SafeLives role and any limitations regarding the matter and the process that will be followed, including a request for a meeting/phone call/skype (as appropriate) to clarify the complaint and discuss the action that SafeLives will undertake.
- appoint a complaint lead – this will usually be a member of staff, but may be an independent person if we believe there is a potential conflict of interest
- aim to meet with (but if this is not possible use telephone/other means) the complainant to clarify the complaint and to decide what action SafeLives will take.
- contact the accredited organisation (Senior management level) concerned to inform them of the complaint made against them and requesting information regarding the complaint, including the process followed by their organisation and the outcome.
- consider the information and response from the accredited organisation that is in alleged breach and SafeLives will make a decision whether further information or action is required and undertake this accordingly.
- consider any safety issues that may arise from taking action and endeavour to minimise any potential risks
- keep the complainant informed
- keep the accredited organisation informed
- undertake further actions as appropriate, draw conclusions from the investigation and make recommendations for any further action in relation to the accredited organisation or the complainant.

- notify the complainant and the accredited organisation of the outcome of the investigation, within 30 days of receiving the complaint, or, as soon as possible, thereafter.
- Decisions will be confirmed in writing to all parties.

Potential outcomes of an investigation:

There are no concerns and the complaint is found to be unsubstantiated

The complaint is substantiated and the service is given an action plan to address the concerns found.

The complaint is substantiated and Leading Lights accreditation is removed (this could be if the service are not prepared to address the gaps found).

SafeLives may alert commissioners if we have serious concerns about a service and will alert commissioners if we remove accreditation.

If any party remains dissatisfied after investigation, they can appeal to SafeLives Board of Trustees within 1 calendar month of the decision. After consideration of an appeal the decision of the Board of trustees will be final; there will not be any further recourse to appeal within SafeLives. Contact details for appeal are in appendix 1.

Record keeping and review

SafeLives will maintain a confidential record of all complaints and the outcomes of any investigations and appeals, in line with our existing Data Protection policy. These will be reviewed annually and fed into development and training for services.

Procedure B - for use when SafeLives lodges a complaint to a Leading Lights accredited service on behalf of a client

SafeLives will only investigate complaints concerning a current Leading Lights accredited service.

Any complaint about a Leading Lights accredited service should be made to SafeLives as soon as possible.

A client wishing SafeLives to complain on their behalf about a Leading Lights accredited service should contact the leading lights programme lead outlining the details of the complaint. This could be via phone, email or post. The leading Lights programme lead will either transcribe the complaint (then ask the complainant to check this for accuracy) or ask the complainant to put this in writing themselves.

The Leading Lights programme lead will seek the consent of the complainant to share their personal information with the Leading Lights accredited service. If the complainant does not consent and wishes their details to be anonymised then the Leading Lights programme lead will explain this and clarify with the complainant what, if any, specific personal information can be shared with the service.

Complaints from clients about Leading Lights accredited services that come via the main office phone numbers, or SafeLives social media pages will be handed over to the Leading Lights programme Lead who will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five working days, outlining SafeLives powers and limitations regarding the matter and the process that will be followed and arrange a meeting/phone call/skype (as appropriate) to clarify the complaint and agree the action that SafeLives will undertake.
- Ensure the client is referred to an alternative domestic abuse service where appropriate to ensure they receive support.
- contact the accredited organisation concerned within 2 days of confirming receipt of the complaint to inform them of the complaint made against them, to outline this and to request the accredited organisations' complaints policy.
- SafeLives will then lodge a complaint with the accredited organisation in line with their complaint policy.
- consider the information and response from the accredited organisation that is in alleged breach and make a decision whether further information or action is required by SafeLives and undertake this accordingly.
- consider any safety issues that may arise from taking action and endeavour to minimise any potential risks.
- keep the complainant informed.
- keep the accredited organisation informed.
- undertake further actions as appropriate, draw conclusions from the outcome of the accredited organisations' investigation and make recommendations to the Leading Lights panel for any further action in relation to the accredited organisation or the complainant. (For example, make a recommendation for a spot check on the service or to revoke Accreditation status).
- notify the complainant and the accredited organisation of the outcome of the investigation, within 30 days of receiving the complaint, or, as soon as possible, thereafter, depending upon the accredited organisation's process times.

Decisions will be confirmed in writing to all parties.

If any party remains dissatisfied after investigation, they can appeal to SafeLives Board of Trustees within 1 calendar month of the decision. After consideration of an appeal the decision of the Board of trustees will be final; there will not be any further recourse to appeal within SafeLives.

SafeLives will maintain a confidential record of all complaints and the outcomes of any investigations and appeals.

Complaints/Compliments about Leading Lights:

SafeLives is committed to continuous improvement in order to ensure we support services to deliver high quality services to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. We will consider complaints made by accredited services or services that have been unsuccessful in achieving accreditation. All services are provided with the opportunity to feedback on their leading lights journey via anonymous evaluation forms. Feedback is analysed and fed into an annual report that is then reviewed by the Accreditation panel and used to develop and improve the programme. Initially complaints and feedback should be sent to the Leading Lights programme Lead or if the complaint relates to the Lead role then complaints can be made to the head of Knowledge Hub. Contact details are in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Contact

If you wish to make a complaint about a Leading Lights accredited service or would like further information about this policy/procedure please contact the Leading Lights Programme Lead.

Judith.Fitzsimons@safelives.org.uk

07825 941439

Suite 2a Whitefriars
Lewins Mead
Bristol
BS1 1NG

If your complaint is in relation to the Leading Lights programme Lead you can contact the Head of Training: Emma Robinson emma.robinson@safelives.org.uk

To appeal the outcome of a complaint you have made you can contact the SafeLives Board of Trustees:

Chair of Trustees
SafeLives
Suite 2a Whitefriars
Lewins Mead
Bristol
BS1 1NG