

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE

“Language Interpreters” aim to demonstrate a fundamental culture in which complaints are encouraged and welcomed.”

### INTRODUCTION

This policy highlights the principles and procedures to be followed on receipt of a complaint (verbal or written) from customers, linguists, staff, service providers, or service users of Language Interpreters.

### WHY HAVE A COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE?

An effective complaints procedure ensures that Language Interpreters has an opportunity to justify any proceedings for an individual or a business who has received poor service, and so that Language Interpreters can rectify and amend the errors and/or improve the accessibility, delivery, and the quality of services provided.

The Language Interpreters Complaints Policy will cover complaints about:

- Accessibility of services provided.
- The standard and quality of services provided.
- The attitude, behaviour or conduct of our staff
- The attitude, behaviour, or conduct of linguists contracted by Language Interpreters.
- Any form of discrimination.

The Language Interpreters Complaints Policy does not cover:

- Anonymous complaints.
- Dissatisfaction with Language Interpreters policies or decisions.
- Matters that have already been fully investigated through the complaint’s procedure.

### WHO MAY COMPLAIN?

The Complaints Policy shall apply to anyone who has received or has asked for any of our services.

### DATA PROTECTION ACT

Language Interpreters as data controller complies with the Data Protection Act. This means that when a person is making a complaint, the member of staff dealing with the complaint must tell

them that under the Data Protection Act their name and address will be taken, in order to progress the complaint and that the information will not be used for any other purposes.

### **FUNCTIONS OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The primary function of the Language Interpreters Complaints Policy will be to address the concerns of the complainant. This may result in Language Interpreters:

- Giving an explanation
- Giving an apology
- Giving assurance that the matter has been investigated and action has been taken to prevent a recurrence.

The secondary function will be:

- To act as feedback to Language Interpreters to help improve the accessibility, quality, and standard of services provided.

### **TIME LIMITS FOR COMPLAINTS**

Normally a complaint should be made within 7 days of the incident.

Language Interpreters have the discretion to extend the complaints period where it would have been unreasonable for the complaint to have been made earlier and where it is still possible to investigate the facts.

### **COMPLIMENTS/COMMENDATIONS**

If service providers and service users wish to commend and/or compliment an individual they can do so by writing directly to Language Interpreters offices.

### **OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE COMPLAINTS POLICY**

- Language Interpreters recognises that given the nature of the services provided and possible communication constraints, it is inevitable that complaints will be received.
- Language Interpreters recognises that many of our service users may have difficulty in expressing their concerns. Staff and contracted linguists will encourage such people to voice their opinions, without fear of prejudice or reproach.
- All core staff, contracted linguists shall be committed to the Language Interpreters Complaints Policy.
- Language Interpreters recognize that suggestions, constructive criticism, and complaints can be valuable aids in the management of developing and maintaining standards of service delivery with the confidence that concerns will be given proper consideration and treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.
- The Language Interpreters Complaints Policy will be directed towards improving services and developing staff, rather than attributing blame.

- To prevent further dissatisfaction about delays, Language Interpreters will ensure that complainants receive a response as swiftly as possible, without jeopardizing other principles.
- Comments and complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence and specific permission sought to share details.
- Language Interpreters will aim regularly to review and amend the Complaints Policy as necessary considering lessons learned from complaints received, changes in legislation, and accepted best practices.

### **ENSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROCEDURE**

- Language Interpreters Management, staff, and contracted linguists can access a copy of the Language Interpreters Complaints Policy through the Privacy Policy on the website, [www.language-interpreters.com](http://www.language-interpreters.com).
- All existing and new workers shall be introduced to the Language Interpreters Complaints Policy through induction and can access a copy through the website.
- The Complaints Policy will be reviewed regularly, and amendments should be proposed to and agreed upon by the Language Interpreters Management.
- Language Interpreters will promote the visibility and accessibility of the Complaints Procedure to service users and service providers through the Language Interpreters website.
- The Language Interpreters Complaints Policy should ensure ease of access for service users to communicate dissatisfaction with the service by telephone, in writing, and by e-mail.
- Language Interpreters will ensure that all complaints, no matter how they are received, or from whom, are treated with equal priority.
- Language Interpreters will ensure complaints are settled in an unbiased manner, to the complainant and, if applicable, the staff or contracted linguist involved.
- Language Interpreters will monitor complaints and appropriately improve the service provided.

### **TRAINING**

Staff, management, and contracted linguists are made aware of the Complaints Procedure during their induction with Language Interpreters.

The recruitment team members at Language Interpreters will ensure that staff and contracted linguists involved in the processing of complaints are supported and feel confident to undertake the work.

### **VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS**

A complaint can be regarded as vexatious when the subject has been considered and found to be unjustified, but when the person making the complaint is:

- Not prepared to accept that conclusion and
- Persists in making the same or a substantially similar complaint.

Continuing to respond to such complaints can take up a significant amount of Language Interpreters' resources in time and money and can thereby detract from the services that can be provided for others.

If the Manager or person in charge considers that a complaint has become vexatious, they can ask Language Interpreters management for support in dealing with the complaint. A Director, in consultation with the Manager, may decide not to pursue the complaint any further. The person making the complaint will be informed of this decision.

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### STAGE 1 – PROBLEM-SOLVING

If you are dissatisfied with the level of service or the conduct of any individual working for Language Interpreters, you should, in the first instance, report this to Language Interpreters as soon as possible.

It is often possible for Language Interpreters to put things right quickly at this stage without the need for you to resort to a formal complaint.

You can report your dissatisfaction in writing, by email, or by phone. Please do not raise your dissatisfaction with a linguist working for Language Interpreters.

#### BY EMAIL

Please email your dissatisfaction in writing at [complaints@language-interpreters.com](mailto:complaints@language-interpreters.com). Language Interpreters will acknowledge your complaint as soon it has been received.

#### BY PHONE

You can report your complaint by telephoning our main landline number 0208 123 5556. This number is staffed by English speakers. Please state clearly

- Your name
- Your telephone number
- That you wish to complain
- A time (within office hours) for Language Interpreters to call you back.

During this informal stage, your complaint will usually be dealt with by the Manager or appointed to a member of staff who has the best understanding of the issues involved.

The member of staff will investigate the complaint, speak to the different parties involved then issue a written report directly to the person who has made the complaint.

If you think that the process is taking too long, or you are unhappy with the outcome of the informal process in Stage 1 you may wish to formalize your complaint by moving to Stage 2.

## **STAGE 2 – FORMAL COMPLAINT**

At this stage, you will be offered a meeting with the Manager to discuss your concerns.

We aim to offer a meeting date within 7 working days of receiving notification (by email or by phone) that you wish to formalize the complaint and proceed to Stage 2.

The Manager will investigate the complaint and the response during the informal stage and attempt to reach an agreement.

The Manager may delegate any aspect of the investigation to a staff member. If the complaint involves a member(s) of staff the Manager will also offer the opportunity to the individual staff member to put forward their account in the form of a written statement.

You will then receive a written reply to your complaint (we aim to respond within 10 working days of the meeting). The written reply will tell you:

- whether we uphold your complaint
- what we plan to do about the issues raised in your complaint
- if we do not agree with your complaint and why
- how you can appeal if you are unhappy with our decision

If your complaint is particularly complex the timescales may be longer. We will keep you informed of the reason for any delay and when you can expect a full reply. If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction during this stage and you remain aggrieved, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.

This intention should be submitted in writing by completing the "Proceed to Stage 3 in writing, by email at [complaints@language-interpreters.com](mailto:complaints@language-interpreters.com) – which will be enclosed with the Manager's response letter.

## **STAGE 3 – YOUR RIGHT TO APPEAL**

You have notified us that you wish to proceed to Stage 3. We aim to respond within 7 working days.

At this stage, your complaint will be looked at by Management.

You will have the option to meet with the Management member/team if you wish and a meeting date will be offered within 10 working days of our receiving notification that you wish to proceed to Stage 3. You will then be sent a letter confirming the decision of the Management team. We aim to respond within 7 working days of meeting with the management.