Complaints Policy

1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy explains what a complaint is and how Shekinah responds to complaints.

It sets out a clear, fair and transparent process so that anyone who raises a concern knows what will happen next.

Shekinah welcomes feedback and complaints as an opportunity to improve our services.

2. Scope of the Policy

Shekinah will accept complaints from anyone who has had contact with the organisation. This includes:

- People using our services
- Family members, advocates or supporters
- Partner organisations and agencies
- Members of the public in communities where we work

This policy applies to all Shekinah services and activities.

Some matters fall outside this policy (see Section 10).

3. Our Commitment and Principles

Shekinah is committed to:

A Positive Complaints Culture

We encourage people to raise concerns and will always take complaints seriously.

Fairness and Respect

All complaints will be handled impartially, without bias, and based on evidence and facts.

No one will be treated differently because they make a complaint.

Protection from Victimisation

No person will be disadvantaged, treated unfairly, denied services, or subjected to adverse treatment because they have made a complaint, supported another person's complaint, or raised concerns about discrimination, harassment, equality or accessibility issues.

Early Resolution

Staff are empowered to resolve issues quickly wherever possible.

Learning and Improvement

We use complaints to improve services, policies and practice.

Openness and Accountability

We acknowledge mistakes, apologise where appropriate, and take responsibility for putting things right.

4. Equality Statement

Shekinah is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and to meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

We aim to provide fair access to services and equitable outcomes regardless of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Shekinah recognises that complaints may relate to unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or a failure to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. Such complaints will be investigated with particular care and consideration of the organisation's legal responsibilities.

Shekinah will make reasonable adjustments where required to enable disabled people and others with communication or accessibility needs to access the complaints process.

Information about this policy and complaints procedures will be provided in accessible formats wherever reasonably practicable.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Board / Senior Leadership

- Overall responsibility for complaint handling
- Ensure complaints data and learning are reviewed regularly

Complaints Lead (Senior Manager)

- Oversees complaint handling
- Identifies trends or systemic issues
- Monitors equality-related complaints and accessibility concerns
- Liaises with external bodies if required

Managers

- Decide whether an issue is a service request or complaint
- Investigate and respond to Stage 1 complaints
- Ensure complaints are properly recorded
- Consider Equality Act obligations where relevant

All Staff

- Understand and follow this policy
- Support people to make complaints
- Make reasonable adjustments where required
- Try to resolve issues quickly and respectfully
- Record complaints and service requests appropriately

6. Definitions

Complaint

A complaint is:

"An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Shekinah, its staff, or those acting on its behalf."

A person does not need to use the word *"complaint"* for it to be treated as one.

Service Request

A service request is when someone asks us to put something right.

If the person is unhappy with how a service request is handled, it will then be treated as a complaint.

Equality-Related Complaint

A complaint alleging:

- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation
- Unequal treatment
- Exclusion
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments

in connection with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

7. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made:

- In person
- By phone
- By email
- In writing
- Through an advocate or supporter

Information about making a complaint is available in accessible formats and staff can explain the process if needed.

Complaints can be accepted in alternative formats and with support from:

- Advocates
- Interpreters
- Family members or supporters
- Accessible communication methods
- Other reasonable adjustments requested by the complainant

Complainants are expected to raise concerns in a reasonable and appropriate manner.

Where behaviour is abusive, harassing, threatening or unreasonably persistent, Shekinah may limit communication or modify the procedure in line with recognised good practice.

8. The Complaints Process

Shekinah uses a two-stage complaints process.

Stage 1 – Investigation

- Complaints will be acknowledged within **5 working days**
- A response will normally be provided within **10 working days**

The response will include:

- A summary of the complaint
- The decision and reasons
- Any actions or remedies offered
- Information on how to escalate to Stage 2 if dissatisfied

Where a complaint alleges discrimination, harassment, victimisation or failure to make reasonable adjustments, the investigation will consider Shekinah's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and relevant organisational policies.

If extra time is needed, we will explain why and agree a revised timescale.

Where there are aspects of the complaint for which Shekinah is not responsible, this will be explained clearly.

Stage 2 – Review

- If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a review
- This should normally be done within **28 days**
- The complaint will be reviewed by a more senior manager
- A response will be provided within **20 working days**

Where there are aspects of the complaint for which Shekinah is not responsible, this will be explained clearly.

This is Shekinah's final internal response.

9. Putting Things Right

People who complain often want:

- An explanation of what happened
- An apology
- Assurance that the issue will not happen again

Actions may include:

- Acknowledging mistakes
- Changing a decision
- Correcting records
- Making reasonable adjustments where appropriate
- Improving services, practices or procedures

- Providing additional staff training

Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the individual resulting from any fault identified.

10. Matters Outside This Policy

The following are not usually dealt with under this policy:

- Staff grievances or whistleblowing concerns
- Issues already fully investigated
- Complaints about events more than 12 months old unless exceptional circumstances apply
- Anonymous complaints (which may be investigated but cannot usually be responded to)
- Legal proceedings once they have commenced

Where a complaint is not accepted under this policy, the reasons will be explained.

11. Monitoring and Reporting

- Complaints are recorded and monitored
- Learning and trends are reviewed regularly by senior management
- Equality-related complaints, accessibility concerns and reasonable adjustment issues are reviewed to identify potential barriers and service improvements
- An annual summary of complaints, learning and improvements will be reported to Trustees

Shekinah will use complaint information to support continuous improvement, promote equality of access and reduce the risk of discrimination or exclusion in its services.

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Policy Owner: Rosanna Eveleigh

Changes log:

Location	Details of change(s)	Amended by	Date
Whole document	Revised EHRC code of practice	Stuart Bakewell	July 2026
Entire document	**Review**	**Rosanna Eveleigh**	**Oct 2026**

Next scheduled review: October 2027