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### 1. Introduction

The Autistic Society Greater Manchester Area (operating as I AM) aims to provide its members and other stakeholders with the best possible service. However, we recognise that from time to time there may be occasions when users of our services feel that the quality or level of service provided falls short of what they could reasonably expect.

Your continued goodwill is greatly valued by us and we would expect to resolve any day to day difficulties or complaints informally and as quickly as possible. In the first instance we would expect you to raise any complaint directly with the member of staff concerned.

The more formal procedure outlined below is intended for use by members and other stakeholders who use I AM services, where informal communication has not resolved the problem.

### 2. What the complainer should do

The complaint should be made either in person or by telephone, letter or email to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO – [ceo@i-am-autism.org.uk](mailto:ceo@i-am-autism.org.uk)) who will acknowledge, in writing (including via email) within ten working days, the receipt of any complaint. A complaint form is attached to make this easier but it is not compulsory to use this.

If the complaint is about a member of the management team, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees (marked ‘confidential’) – [chair@i-am-autism.org.uk](mailto:chair@i-am-autism.org.uk).

For very serious concerns, such as an individual’s safety being placed at immediate risk, take such action as is appropriate, for example, by calling the emergency services.

### 3. What I AM will do

The CEO (or a member of the Trustee Board) will investigate the circumstances leading to the complaint; they may contact the complainer to obtain clarification or further information. They aim to communicate



the results of the investigation to the complainer within a reasonable time – normally within 20 working days of the complaint being received. If this is not possible, a holding reply will be sent after 20 days advising when we estimate the investigation will be completed.

If the complaint is found to be justified, the CEO (or member of the Trustee Board) will agree any necessary further action with the complainer.

The complainer may be accompanied or supported by a friend, but not a legal representative, at any face-to-face interview or discussion.

The complainer will have the right – if dissatisfied with the results of the enquiry – to put their case, in writing, to an appeal panel of three Trustee Board members, which will include at least one Honorary Officer.

If the appeal is found to be justified, the appeal panel will agree any necessary further action with the complainer. The decision of the appeal panel is final and no further appeal is possible within the I AM Complaints Policy and Procedure.

The complaint will be treated as confidential and any communication on this issue, including responding to the complainant, will be subject to compliance with data protection legislation.

## 4. Wider Action

Irrespective of the outcome of any complaint, we will consider if there is any requirement in respect of wider action and/or statutory reporting to the Charity Commission, H&S Executive, other regulator, or the Police.

Consideration will also be given to whether any changes should be made to policies, procedures, training etc to see if anything might reasonably be done to prevent a similar issue arising in future.

## 5. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be recorded and any facts available looked in to. However, in doing so we will be mindful that anonymous complaints can sometimes be malicious. Everyone involved in our work, even incidentally, has a right to complain and we will hold anyone accountable but, equally, individuals have a right to be protected from unsubstantiated and, potentially, malicious allegations.

Consequently, anyone wishing to complain is strongly encouraged to provide the information requested above and their contact details. This will also allow us to advise them of the outcome.

## 6. Data Protection Complaints

Complaints concerning data protection are covered by I AM's Data Protection Policy but broadly follow the actions and responsibilities set out in this policy. All complaints will be handled fairly, transparently, and in



accordance with obligations under data protection legislation. If a complainer remains dissatisfied after this process, they may escalate the matter to the Information Commission.

## 7. Reporting on Complaints

The CEO (or Chair) will keep the Trustee Board informed of the number and nature of complaints, and the outcomes. They will report to the Board on this at least annually.

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