

Vhi Healthcare

Procedure for dealing with Complaints under the Disability Act 2005

A complaint may be made against Vhi Healthcare (Vhi) if they do not comply with the provisions of Sections 25, 26, 27 and 28 of the Disability Act 2005 as follows:

- Public buildings, by 2015, must comply with accessibility requirements in line with Part M Building Regulations. (Section 25)
- With effect from December 2005, services for persons with and persons without disabilities should be integrated. Assistance in accessing the service should be provided and there should be at least one Access Officer on the staff to assist and guide people with disabilities in accessing the service. (Section 26)
- Goods and services provided to public bodies should be as far as practicable appropriate. (Section 27)
- Communication (oral/written/electronic) should be provided in a form that is accessible to persons with hearing or visual impairments. Information relevant to persons with an intellectual disability should be easy to understand and in clear language. (Section 28)

Complaints

- Any individual can make a complaint to the Vhi if we have not complied with sections 25, 26, 27 or 28 of the Disability Act 2005 (as outlined above).
- A complaint can be made in person, in writing, by phone, fax, e-mail, minicom, or with an assistant.
- In most instances the complaint will be made to the Chief Executive of Vhi. However, in all cases the staff members receiving the complaint will notify the Inquiry Officer and the Chief Executive upon receipt of the complaints.
- The complainant will be informed of the contact details of the Inquiry Officer and referred to these procedures.
- All complaints will be logged by the staff member who receives the complaint and the complaint will be referred to the Inquiry Officer.
- The Vhi Inquiry Officer is Dermot Maguire who will act in an independent capacity as required in the Disability Act.
- The Vhi will follow the Ombudsman's Guide to Internal Complaints Systems.

Registering and Acknowledging Complaints

- The Inquiry Officer will maintain an electronic and paper file for each complaint and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible but no later than five working days after receipt.

Screening of Complaints

- The Inquiry Officer will screen the complaint to establish if it relates to an alleged failure by the body to comply with sections 25, 26, 27 or 28 of the Disability Act. However, if this is not the case, he/she will advise on alternative avenues of redress. If, in the opinion of the Inquiry Officer, the complaint is frivolous or vexatious, the complainant will be notified of this and the Ombudsman's Guide to Internal Complaints Systems will be applied.

Request for Information/Reports/Files

- The Inquiry Officer may request further details/information from the complainant and, if deemed necessary, the Inquiry Officer will consult with all relevant parties/sections regarding the matter.

Action while Awaiting Reports

- Information requested should be supplied to the Inquiry Officer within a maximum period of two weeks from date of request. In the absence of a response, written reminders or telephone reminders are made as judged appropriate. In the absence of receipt of a submission from the complainant the Inquiry Officer should proceed with the investigation.

Interviews

- In the course of the investigation it may be necessary to interview the complainant or staff members within the organisation, e.g. to discuss questions of interpretation or to elicit information. A record will be maintained. At the end of each interview, a check will be carried out to ensure that the account contained in the notes is accurate.
- All interviews will be arranged in advance.
- All staff members are obliged to co-operate fully with the Inquiry Officer's investigation.

Examination of Case and Report

- The Inquiry Officer will examine all information received and record findings. Where a failure is identified, he/she will outline the steps to be taken to ensure future compliance.
- In cases where the Inquiry Officer is not of the opinion that the complaint is frivolous or vexatious, he/she will investigate the complaint.
- The Inquiry Officer will prepare a written report of the results of the investigation setting out his/her findings together with a determination in relation to:-
 - whether there has been a failure by Vhi to comply with the relevant provision of the Disability Act, and

- if such a determination indicates that there has been such a failure, the steps required to be taken by Vhi to comply with the relevant provision of the Act.

This will be completed within three working weeks from the date of receipt of the complaint where possible, or as soon as possible in instances where information / data are not readily available.

- The Inquiry Officer will prepare a written report of the results of the investigation.

Notification of Decision

- A summary of the findings and decision of the report will be given to the complainant and the Senior Management Team.
- The complainant will be advised of his or her right of appeal to the Ombudsman at the Office of the Ombudsman, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.
- If the determination of the Inquiry Officer is that Vhi has failed to comply with a provision of the Act, the Chief Executive will be informed and the report will outline the steps required for compliance.

Closing a Complaint

- Once the complainant has been given the findings of the report and been notified of the decision, the complaint file may be closed.
- The electronic and paper file will record the result, date file closed and any other relevant details.
- The Inquiry Officer will present an annual report, including complaint statistics, to the Senior Management Team on the operation of the complaints procedure.

Publication

- This procedure is available on the Vhi Healthcare website and to Vhi Healthcare customers, upon request.

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Approval: _____
Dermot Maguire

Date: _____