**Terms of Reference**

**Sage Advocacy Independent Complaints Review Panel**

1. **Purpose**

* To support Sage Advocacy in operating an independent, transparent and accountable complaints process.
* To carry out, on application to it, an independent review of complaints made to Sage Advocacy.

1. **Members**

The Independent Complaints Review Panel has three members with necessary experience who are appointed by the Board of Trustees of Sage Advocacy.

June 2021 Members:

* Mr Pat Whelan, Chair, former Director General of the Office of the Ombudsman for Ireland.
* Caroline Lynch, Consultant and former Head of Communications and Advocacy with Trocaire and the Irish Hospice Foundation.
* Kieran Coughlan, former Clerk of Dáil Éireann and former member of the Standards in Public Office Commission.

Lara Gallagher, Information Systems Officer provides secretariat to the Panel.

1. **Role of the Chair**

The Chair has responsibility for setting meeting dates, setting the agenda and agreeing

relevant documents for circulation to the Panel, approval of minutes of the meeting, and running the meeting.

1. **Resigning or removing a member**

A member of the Panel may resign at any time by indicating their resignation in writing to the Chair of the Panel and the Planning, Policy & Performance Committee. The Chair of the Panel may recommend the removal of a member, having consulted the Panel, to the Chair of the Planning, Policy & Performance Committee. The Chair will advise the Planning, Policy & Performance Committee of his/her resignation. The recommendation for removal may be for reasons including, but not limited to non-attendance, disruption, breaches of confidentiality or conflict of interests.

1. **Powers**

The Panel acts as an independent advisory body to the Sage Advocacy Board of Trustees who retain responsibility for all governance matters.

* When requested and where admissible, the Panel will review a decision on a complaint. The Panel may either confirm the CEO’s decision on the complaint or refer the matter back to the CEO for reconsideration in accordance with guidance provided by the Panel.
* The Panel’s decision is normally final and conclusive. However, it may, in certain circumstances, be reviewable by the Ombudsman.
* Decisions are made by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached the matter is deferred to enable further information gathering and discussion. If consensus cannot be reached, and a decision is required, the Panel may decide to make the decision by simple majority, with, in the event of an equality of votes, the Chair having a vote.
* Where there is a Request for a Review of a Complaint, the Panel will be permitted access to all of the relevant records and information held by Sage Advocacy that relates to the specific complaint and request for review.

1. **Conflict of Interests**

A declaration of conflict of interests will be a standing item on the agenda of the Panel and all conflicts noted.

1. **Meetings**

Meetings will occur at a minimum 3 times per year in the Sage Advocacy offices. Where this is not possible, the meetings will be held online through Microsoft Teams. These meetings will be attended by the Secretary, the CEO and/or the Case Management & Support (Asst. CEO). The Panel may decide to invite additional persons to attend to provide an expert opinion or expertise as is required.

1. **Reporting**

The Panel will report annually to the Board of Trustees on their work. The CEO will provide updates from ICRP meetings to the Board throughout the year.

1. **Review**

* A member will be part of the Independent Complaints Review Panel for a period of 3 years, with the option to continue membership with the agreement of the Board up to a further period of 3 years.
* The Panel will review membership annually, or so often as it sees fit and advise the Planning, Policy & Performance Committee of any membership requirements.
* The Panel will review its terms of reference annually and make recommendations to the Planning, Policy & Performance Committee as appropriate.

1. **Information Requirements**

For each of its regular meetings, the Panel will be provided with the following one week ahead of the meeting:

* Agenda
* Minutes of previous meeting
* Complaints/Compliments received since last meeting
* Any other documentation to be discussed at the meeting.

Where there is a Request for a Review of a Complaint, the Panel will be provided with access to the records relating to the request.