



# **COMPLAINTS POLICY and PROCEDURE**

## **1. Introduction**

We recognise that our members, volunteers and all those who visit our community or any of our community activities have the right to expect high quality services. However, we also appreciate that from time to time there may be occasions when users of our services or those that volunteer in delivering those services feel that the quality or level of service provided, attitude or behaviour of staff or volunteers, falls short of what they could reasonably expect.

Your continued goodwill is greatly valued, and we expect to resolve any day-to-day difficulties or complaints informally and as quickly as possible. In the first instance we would ask you to raise any complaint directly with the community member concerned. If their response does not meet expected standards, then you have the right to complain.

## **2. Scope**

A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about an action or lack of action by a person acting on behalf of the community, or about the policies and procedures of the community.

The complaint could be about:

- conduct, attitude or behaviour of our leadership and/or some or all members of our community;
- the standard or sort of service we provide;
- any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment;
- provision of inaccurate information;
- poor administration, including delays in responding to enquiries.

We will consider any complaint using the procedures set out below.

## **3. Purpose**

What is the purpose of the policy?

- To guard Community ethos and live the Community Rule in practice.
- To protect the interests of all community users, visitors and volunteer.
- To improve the quality of services we provide by responding to the views and needs of people affected.
- To enable community volunteers, members and visitors to propose improvements to our ways of working.
- To protect our overseers, employees, volunteers and community members.
- To provide a means of monitoring our performance.

The leadership and Trustees should be familiar with the process. Complaints against the overseers should be passed to the Trustees.

## **4. Safeguarding**

If a complaint or grievance relates to or includes matters covered by the safeguarding policy (e.g. inappropriate behaviour that falls within the domain of safeguarding, allegations of abuse or allegations that a vulnerable child or adult has been harmed or is at risk of harm), the matter must be addressed using the Safeguarding Policy and procedure.

## **5. Records**

All complaints should be recorded by the Trustees and lodged in the appropriate confidential file. Details recorded should include the nature of the complaint and the date received, any people, facilities or equipment involved, the process followed, the action taken, and the outcomes, including further follow-up. If an improvement plan is required, this should be outlined, cross referenced as appropriate and signed off when complete. Progress reports against objectives should be formally recorded in leadership meetings. Complaints information will be added as a regular reporting item to Trustees, from Operational leaders. The Chair will keep the Board of Trustees informed of the number, nature and outcomes of complaints. To balance this measure, a record of compliments will also be a regular reporting item.

## **6. Complaints Procedure**

When responding to complaints, the aim is always to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily, and fairly by mutual discussion.

### **Step 1 - Informal Procedure**

- The person making the complaint should in the first instance speak to the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, which will hopefully be resolved in this way.
- A summary note should be prepared at the end of the discussion, outlining the complaint, the date, who was involved, and the agreed-upon outcome.
- This record will be passed to the Overseers to ensure lessons are learned by the community.
- Overseers will report any complaint to the Chair of Trustees.
- If a complainant is still not satisfied, the complaint should move to Step 2: the Formal Procedure.

### **Step 2 - Formal Procedure**

- The complaint should be made in writing (or by email), marked “confidential”, to the Overseers, who will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint in writing (or by email) within ten working days. If the complaint is about the Overseers, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees or in their absence, any Trustee.
- The receiver of the complaint (the Trustees or the Overseers):
  - will investigate the circumstances leading to the complaint; and
  - will normally communicate the results of the investigation to the complainant within 20 working days of the complaint being received.
- In normal circumstances the investigation will include a meeting (in person or online) between the receiver of the complaint (the Trustees or Overseers) and the complainant. The complainant may be accompanied or supported by a friend, but not a legal representative.
- If the complaint is found to be justified, the investigator will inform the complainant of the proposed next steps.

- A formal note should be prepared, summarising:
  - the complaint;
  - the date;
  - who was involved, and
  - the outcome.and passed to the appropriate member of the Leadership Team.
- The note should be discussed with the person against whom the complaint was made, including the proposed next steps and any appropriate communications to ensure lessons are learned by the community.
- Where possible, principles of confidentiality and dignity for individuals should be maintained.
- If the complainant is still not satisfied, they should move to Point 7.

## **7. Escalation – When your complaint cannot be resolved**

Where we have exhausted all avenues and the complainant is still dissatisfied, they may contact the Charity Commission as follows:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

## **8. External third parties**

We may choose at our own discretion, to involve third-party organisations at any stage of the process.

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