

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK POLICY

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1. Context

The Children's Literacy Charity values all feedback on our work whether positive or negative as it helps us to learn and improve. Dealing with complaints effectively demonstrates our commitment to our beneficiaries and supporters and helps us to prevent things from going wrong again in the future. Sharing positive feedback acts as a motivator for staff and volunteers and reinforces effective practice.

2. Definitions

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the charity. Complaints may be made directly or via a third person verbally, by phone, in writing or by email.

3. Scope

This policy does not cover complaints from employees who should use the charity's discipline and grievance policies.

This policy covers feedback shared with us directly or via a third person verbally, by phone, in writing or by email.

4. Policy statement

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure that is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at the charity knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The person responsible for managing complaints is the Head of Finance (HEF). They are responsible for logging all complaints and compiling an annual list to be discussed by the senior team.

All staff members are responsible for sharing the feedback they receive from beneficiaries, stakeholders, supporters and the general public.

6. Guidelines

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints: Written complaints may be sent to The Children's Literacy Charity at the main office address or by e-mail to info@theclc.org.uk

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 020 7740 1008 or in person to any member of the charity's staff or trustee board.

Positive feedback

If feedback is positive we will usually circulate it to other staff and volunteers within the charity, having first removed any identifying names. This feedback acts as a great motivator for staff and volunteers and it may be used to help us identify good practice. The feedback may also be used in marketing and promotional material about our services. We will not publish your name unless we ask for your permission to do so.

Complaints

Complaints can come through many different routes and we treat any negative feedback as a complaint.

Stage 1

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded. The person who receives a complaint by phone or in person should

- write down the facts of the complaint
- take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure, what will happen next and how long it will take
- where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the HEF within one week. On receiving the complaint, the HEF records it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, they delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within 5 working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage 2

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at a higher level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who will designate a suitably senior person to investigate. Where the complaint relates to the SLT the complaint may be referred directly to the Trustee Board. The Board will be kept informed of all Stage 2 complaints. The request for Stage 2 review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply. The lead person may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

This procedure may be varied for good reason and in particular to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about a member of the SLT will not have another member of the SLT as the person leading a Stage Two review.

Further options

If the complainant still considers the complaint unresolved they may be able to get advice from the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission has a publication “Complaints about Charities” at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-charities> which sets out the kind of complaints the Charity Commission will investigate.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Appendix 1

Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.