

Complaints Policy

Document Control

Author	Operations Manager
Decision Maker (approval)	Board of Trustees

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Complaints Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

Heart of Bucks recognises that although we endeavour to provide a positive and beneficial experience to all who are in contact with us, issues will sometimes occur that give rise to a complaint being made.

We recognise that the making of a complaint does not automatically mean that an error has occurred or that service delivery has been poor.

Nevertheless, we are committed to seeking continuous improvement in our service and it is our intention that complaints should be used as an opportunity to review, assess and learn.

This procedure outlines the process that Heart of Bucks (HoB) will follow when complaints are received from an **external** organisation or individual.

If a staff member wishes to raise a complaint this should be handled in accordance with the Grievance Procedures and/or the Disciplinary Procedure in the Employee Handbook or under the Whistleblowing Policy.

2. Principles

The Board of Trustees have delegated day-to-day management of complaints to the Chief Executive, subject to the following principles:

- 2.1 Complainants will be treated with respect and taken seriously.
- 2.2 Complainants will be given the fullest opportunity to explain the reason for their complaint and the impact it has had.
- 2.3 No assumptions will be made regarding the causes or impact of the issue in question.
- 2.4 An investigation will be carried out to determine:
 - The reasons for the issue arising
 - Any contributory factors (including actions or omissions by the complainant or third parties)
 - Any communications issues which may have exacerbated the issue
 - Any corrective action now required
 - Any preventative action that could avoid a similar occurrence in future.

- 2.5 Complainants will be given the opportunity for a further review if unsatisfied with the complaint response.
- 2.6 The investigator will immediately alert the Vice-Chair if the complaint has the potential to require regulatory or statutory reporting, investigation by legal or enforcement authorities or other significant reputational risk.

3. Handling Complaints

- 3.1 On receipt of a complaint, either verbally or in writing, the complaint will be recorded in the **Complaints Register** and referred immediately to the Chief Executive.
 - 3.2 If the Chief Executive is the subject of the complaint, the complaint will initially be investigated by the Vice-Chair supported by two Board members (and then, if necessary, reviewed by the Chairman).
 - 3.3 An acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint should be sent within **48 hours** and the complainant advised that a further response will be sent **within 10 working days**, unless otherwise advised.
 - 3.4 The investigator will consider what happened and why, who was involved, whether there were any other factors which contributed to the issue arising.
 - 3.5 If it is not possible to respond to the complainant **within 10 working days**, the complainant should be advised of this and given an expected time for the matter to be concluded.
4. Unless otherwise agreed by the complainant, a written response should be sent including, where appropriate, a description of how the issue has been corrected and/or how HoB will prevent future occurrences.
 5. If appropriate the Chief Executive will commence separate disciplinary procedures in accordance with the Policy set out in the Employee Handbook.

6. Further Review

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response provided, they may write to the Vice-Chair of Trustees who will make arrangements for an Appeals Panel, comprising the Chairman of the Board (to be Chair of the panel), and two further Trustees who ideally will have had

no prior contact with either the complainant or the subject of the complaint.

The panel will review the complaint, the investigation carried out to date, and the response provided and will make a further response **within 14 working days**.

7. If deemed appropriate, the Board of Trustees may seek further guidance from the UK Community Foundation Network (UKCF) and/or from external reviewers – subject to appropriate data protection measures being in place.

8. Review

This Policy will be reviewed every three years unless circumstances require an earlier review.

Elizabeth Howe

Signed On behalf of Heart of Bucks

Name: Countess E Howe DL

Date: 28th September 2020