



## Complaints Policy

Document Control

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| <b>Decision Maker (approval)</b> | Board of Trustees  |

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| V1.0           | Final         | Feb 2013             | 2016                   |                                                               |
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| V4.0           | Approved      | Dec 2023             | Dec 2026               |                                                               |
| V5.0           | Approved      | Jul 2026             | Jul 2029               | Amendment to reflect new Data Protection Complaints Procedure |

# 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, including volunteers (including trustees) and staff who are no longer engaged with HoB.

If a current staff member or volunteer, including trustees and committee members wish 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.

Complaints relating specifically to the processing of personal data are handled in accordance with the Heart of Bucks Data Protection Complaints Procedure.

## 2. Principles

The Board of Trustees have delegated day-to-day management of complaints to the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team, 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 Chief Executive and Chairman 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 The Chief Executive will either act as the investigator, or will appoint a member of the Senior Management team in this role.

3.3 If the Chief Executive, Chairman or a Trustee are the subject of the complaint, the complaint will initially be investigated by the Vice-Chairman who may be supported by other Board members if required. If the Vice-Chairman is the subject of the complaint, the Chairman shall be the investigator.

3.3 Receipt of the complaint should be acknowledged within **48 hours** and the complainant informed 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. If action is required in respect of a trustee, this will be instigated by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman.

**6. Further Review**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response provided, they may appeal to the Vice-Chairman of Trustees for a further review.

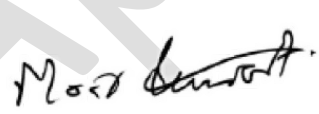
The Vice-Chairman will review the complaint, the investigation and initial response, and will respond to the complainant **within 14 working days**.

If the issue is complex, the Vice Chairman may make arrangements for an Appeals Panel to be assembled, comprising the Vice-Chairman or 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.

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.

**Signed** .....  On behalf of Heart of Bucks

Name: Moir Stewart

Date: 10/07/2026