



Policy Title:	Complaints, Compliments and Comments
Approval Date:	November 2023
Next Review Date:	November 2026
Approval:	Board of Trustees
Summary:	The purpose of this policy is to communicate the Charity's arrangements for ensuring that Grievances are properly managed
Implementation:	This policy will be disseminated to employees and other members of the Charity via the electronic filing system and access to a shared drive. Members of the public any young people will be able to see them on the website.

Document History:

Version	Date	Status	Comment/Changes
1	Nov 2023	Approved	This document will need to be uploaded to website once approved.

Context

1. Policy Statement
2. Types of Feedback
3. Timeframe to Raise Your Feedback
4. Process for Actioning Your Feedback
5. How to Share Your Feedback
Appendix: Procedure (not part of policy)

1. Policy Statement

We are committed to delivering services with the highest standards of care and committed to ensuring ongoing organisational development to maintain excellence. Your complaints, compliments and comments help us to learn about, and improve, how we work.

This complaints, compliments and comments policy and procedures applies to anyone not working for the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to:

- young people
- funders
- parents and caregivers
- members of the public
- other organisations.

If you are an employee, volunteer or working for the organisation in another capacity, please see the relevant policy and procedure for your feedback.

2. Types of Feedback

2.1 Compliments

We strive to improve what we do, not only by making improvements when things go wrong but by building on our success. Therefore, hearing what we are doing well benefits individuals as well as the organisation. Compliments about the organisation help us to understand what is valuable and working well so that we can build on that success. We ensure any specific feedback reaches staff or volunteers so they can hear what you found great too.

2.2 Complaints

We define a complaint as: “an expression of dissatisfaction about our service, actions taken, or a lack of action taken, by or on behalf of the organisation”. Complaints may include but are not limited to:

- concerns about the quality or standard of service
- financial mis-management or inappropriate fundraising methods
- inappropriate behaviour, poor treatment or poor attitude by someone working on behalf of the organisation
- non-compliance by the organisation to follow an appropriate policy or procedure, or a general dissatisfaction with them

2.3 Comments

We welcome any other thoughts, comments or feedback you have about what we do and the people who are doing it with us. Our organisation exists to make a difference and hearing what you think about what we do and how we do it, helps us continue to develop.

2.4 Anonymous Feedback

We encourage all feedback to be sent by a named person so that we can share thanks, follow up with you or share an outcome. However, anonymous feedback will be read and treated with the same level of appreciation and seriousness, although it may not result in the most comprehensive action.

3. Timeframe to Raise Your Feedback

3.1 Compliments and Comments

You can compliment us or give general feedback at any time.

3.2 Complaints

We encourage all complaints to be made as soon after an incident as possible. This helps us to act on your complaints in the most comprehensive way. If you are unable to do so immediately we ask that a complaint be made up to 6 months of either:

- the date the matter which is the subject of a complaint is about occurred, or
- if it was later, the date on which the complainant became aware of the matter.

The time limit will not apply if we are satisfied that there was a good reason for the complaint not being made within the time limit. Any complaints made beyond this time frame that are upheld will be considered historical complaints. Historical complaints will still be taken seriously.

In instances of historical complaints, we may be more limited in the information we can access during an investigation. However, we will still pursue a historical complaint if it is possible to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly.

4. Process for Actioning Your Feedback

4.1 Compliments and Comments

We will always do our best to acknowledge your comments and compliments. However, if we have been unable to, they are always appreciated and we strive for them to be passed on to any relevant parties internally.

4.2 Complaints

4.2.1 Verbal or Written

However you contact us regarding a complaint, you will receive a response and it will be dealt with in a timely manner. There will be an internal report made and any necessary action will be fully taken to resolve the complaint. We endeavour for all complaints to be resolved swiftly and completely.

Where possible and appropriate, please try and speak directly to the team or person involved. We hope that many of the complaints raised can be resolved by this direct approach, prior to an investigation. If you are unable to take this direct approach, please use the contact details outlined in section 5.2.

On receipt of a complaint, as outlined in section 3, we will:

1. acknowledge your complaint within three working days
2. carry out an internal investigation
3. provide a written response of our findings and any follow up action taken as soon as possible, but not later than a further 15 working days (20 working days total)
4. provide details of how to appeal the outcome of the investigation.

If the investigation is anticipated to take longer than the timescale outlined above, you will be notified of a revised deadline before the 15 working days expires. You will then be given a further date by which you can expect to receive a written response.

4.2.2 Complaints About the Youth Work Manager or a Trustee

All complaints are taken seriously. This includes complaints about the Youth Work Manager, Trustee or other senior leader of the organisation. However, we recognise the need to report these to the most appropriate person. See section 5.2 for who to contact.

4.2.3 Appealing an Unsatisfactory Response

An appeal must be submitted in writing within 15 working days from the date of the correspondence notifying you of the outcome, and must satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- you have new, relevant information (which you have not previously submitted)
- there is a failure to consider adequately, or at all, information you provided in connection with the complaint
- the conclusion and response to your complaint is unreasonable based on the information provided

On receipt of a legitimate appeal we will:

- acknowledge your appeal within three working days
- complete a further investigation that will be carried out by a different person to the initial investigation. This could be:
 - someone more senior within the organisation
 - a dedicated Complaints Officer
 - LADO
 - an independent external party e.g. an Ombudsman
- provide a written response of our findings and any follow up action taken as soon as possible, but not later than a further 15 working days (20 working days total)

If the investigation is anticipated to take longer than the timescale outlined above, you will be notified of a revised deadline before the 15 working days expires. You will be given a further date by which you can expect to receive a written response.

This outcome will be final. There are no further internal escalation channels. If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of your appeal, please see section 4.2.4 for how to escalate complaints externally.

4.2.4 External complaints

We strive to resolve all complaints internally and at the earliest opportunity. However, if you continue to be dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, including the appeal outcome, you are invited to raise your concern(s) externally.

Complaints can be raised with any relevant statutory body, including but not limited to:

- Council or Council Complaints Officer
- The Charity Commission
- Allegation against staff or volunteer LADO
- The Fundraising Regulator
- Information Commissioner's Office

4.3 Managing Your Information and Confidentiality

All written complaints will be logged in as much detail as is necessary. This includes the personal information of the person making the complaint. Information about individual complaints will only be shared with those who need access for a legitimate purpose. This includes staff investigating and responding to the complaint.

Steps will be taken to maintain your confidentiality, beyond the people who need to look into your complaint. On occasion your information may be shared with others internally as well as externally when we are legally required to do so. Your data will be handled in line with the Data Protection Act (2018).

5. How to Share Your Feedback

5.1 How to Contact Us

We encourage all feedback to be in written form, whether email or letter. If feedback is given orally we encourage it to be followed up in writing, particularly for complaints. This ensures the feedback is received in its truest form. This is to be then given or sent to info@didcottrain.org.uk or Alex@didcottrain.org.uk

5.2 Who to Contact

Whether you have a complaint, compliment or comment we always encourage you to speak directly to the team or person involved first. See section 4.2 for more details on the process for raising a complaint.

If you have been unable to give feedback directly, below are the contact details for who to contact whether your feedback is about someone working on behalf of the organisation, the organisation and its services, or the Youth Work Manager.

If regarding a member of staff that is not the Youth Work Manager email alex@didcottrain.org.uk

If regarding Youth Work Manager nicole@didcottrain.org.uk

If regarding the charity and you feel you can't get in contact with trustees, then the Charity Commission.

Appendix: Procedure for complaints

The procedure is intended to provide a quick, simple and streamlined procedure with a strong focus on early resolution by empowered and well-trained staff. The procedure involves up to two stages, details of which are explained below.

- Stage 1 - Frontline Resolution seeks to resolve straightforward complaints swiftly and effectively at the point at which the complaint is made, or as close to that point as possible.
- Stage 2 - Complaint Investigation is appropriate where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of frontline resolution, or where frontline resolution is not possible or appropriate due to the complexity or seriousness of the case.

6.1

IF THERE IS A ALLIGATION AGAINST A MEMEBR OF STAFF OR VOLENTEER THIS MUST BE REPORTED TO THE LADO WITHIN 24 HOURS. YOU MUST NOT INVESTIGATE UNTIL THEY TELL YOU TO DO SO.

FRONT LINE RESOLUTION	INVESTIGATION	INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL REVIEW (Charity Commission or other)
<p>For issues that are straight forward and easily resolved or required little investigation</p> <p>Addressed by any member of staff or referred to the appropriate point of contact for frontline resolution.</p> <p>On the spot apology, explanation or other action to resolve the complaint quickly. (Unless under exceptional circumstances this 5 working days or less)</p> <p>Complaint details, outcome and action taken should be recorded and used for ongoing service improvements</p>	<p>For issues that have not been resolved at the frontline, that are complex, serious or high risk.</p> <p>A definitive response should be provided within 20 days following a thorough process of investigation.</p> <p>Senior management should have an active interest in complaints in order to improve services and responses to complex or serious complaints should be signed off by senior management.</p> <p>One trustee must not be party to any information regarding the complaint as they may be needed in a appeal process.</p> <p>Complainants who remain dissatisfied after an investigation has been completed have the right to review and where appropriate can contact an independent organisation for resolution.</p>	<p>For issues that have not been resolved through the Charity procedures.</p> <p>Any complaints raised with the Charity commission should have been thoroughly invested internally.</p> <p>The Charity commission will assess whether there is sufficient evidence of service failure or maladministration by the service provider.</p>

Stage 1: Frontline Resolution – to be completed within five working days

Anyone who has a complaint is encouraged to raise it initially at the point of, or as close to the point of, becoming aware of it as possible and to raise it with the Youth Work Manager area in which the issue arose. Complaints at this stage may be made face-to-face, by phone, in writing or by email.

The purpose of frontline resolution is to attempt to resolve as quickly as possible complaints which are straightforward and require little or no investigation. Complaints at this stage of the process may be addressed by any relevant member of the Charity's staff and may be handled by way of a face-to-face discussion with the complainant, or by asking an appropriate member of staff to deal with the complaint.

Members of staff to whom complaints are made will consider some key questions:

- Is this a complaint or should the individual be referred to another procedure?
- What specifically is the complaint (or complaints) about and which area(s) of the Charity is /are involved?
- What outcome is the complainant hoping for and can it be achieved?
- Is this complaint straightforward and likely to be resolved with little or no investigation?
- Can the complaint be resolved on the spot by providing an apology /explanation / alternative solution?
- If I cannot help, can another member of staff assist in seeking a frontline resolution?
- What assistance can be provided to the complainant in taking this forward?

Resolution may be achieved by providing an on-the-spot explanation of why the issue occurred and/or an apology and, where possible, what will be done to stop this happening in the future.

If responsibility for the issue being complained about lies in the staff member's area of work, every attempt will be made to resolve the problem at source. If responsibility lies elsewhere, the staff member receiving the complaint will liaise with the relevant area. We will give you our decision at Stage 1 within five working days unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Our response will:

- clearly outline our decision providing clear, evidence based reasons for this decision,
- Respond openly to all of the substantive points raised by a complainant and explaining why the organisation considers these points justified or not,
- Take responsibility for the actions of our staff and those acting on behalf of the organisation,
- Acknowledge if things have gone wrong and take proportionate action to put things right, including apologising where appropriate,
- Include any lesson learnt and any changes made to services, guidance or policy as a result of the complaint.

Extension to the five-day timeline - Frontline resolution should normally be completed within five working days, though a resolution may be achieved more quickly. In exceptional circumstances a short extension of time may be necessary to increase the possibility of resolving the complaint at the frontline resolution stage (for example, by obtaining information from other areas where no single area of the Charity is responsible for the issue(s) being complained about).

Where an extension is required this must be agreed by an appropriate senior manager. The complainant must be told of the reasons for extending the deadline and advised of the new timescale for resolution.

Closing the complaint at the frontline resolution stage - The outcome will be communicated to the complainant. This may be face-to-face, by phone, in writing or by email. There is no requirement to send out further written communication to the complainant, although the Charity may issue a written response where it seems helpful to do so. Once a decision has been issued, the record of the complaint must be updated, including details of the decision reached. The complaint should then be closed.

Stage 2: Complaint Investigation – to be completed within 20 working days

These complaints may already have been considered at the frontline resolution stage, or they may be complaints identified upon receipt as appropriate for immediate investigation. A complaint will be moved to the investigation stage when:

- frontline resolution was attempted, but the complainant remains dissatisfied. This may be after the case has been closed following the frontline resolution stage;
- the complainant refuses to recognise or engage with the frontline resolution process and is insistent that the issue be addressed by a Trustee;
- the issues raised are complex and will require detailed investigation;
- the complaint relates to issues that have been identified by the Charity as high risk or high profile.

Special attention will be given to identifying complaints considered high risk or high profile, as these may require particular action or may raise critical issues requiring direct input from senior management. Potential high risk /high profile complaints may:

- involve a death or serious injury;
- involve serious service failure, for example major delays in service provision or repeated failures to provide a service;
- generate significant and on-going press interest;
- pose a serious operational risk to the Charity;
- allegation against a staff member or volunteer
- present issues of a highly sensitive nature.

A person can make a complaint in writing, in person, by telephone, by email, online or by having someone complain on their behalf. Where it is clear that a complaint will need to be considered at the investigation stage rather than through frontline resolution, the complainant will be asked to complete the appropriate complaint form to provide full details of the complaint and include any relevant documentation. If they choose not to write it down and would prefer to complain in person, the complaint form can be completed with them and a letter to confirm the scope of the complaint issued to them.

The purpose of conducting an investigation is to establish all of the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and to provide a full, objective and proportionate response to the complainant that represents the Charity's definitive position.

What the Charity will do when it receives a complaint for Stage 2 Complaint Investigation - The Charity will allocate the complaint to a Complaint Investigator (see section Governance of the Complaint Handling Procedure below). It is important to be clear from the start of the investigation stage exactly what is being investigated, and to ensure that both the complainant and the investigator understand the scope of the investigation. In discussion with the complainant, three key questions should be considered:

1. What specifically is the complaint (or complaints)?
2. What does the complainant hope to achieve by complaining?
3. Do the complainant's expectations appear to be reasonable and achievable?

If the complainant's expectations appear to exceed what the Charity can reasonably provide or are not within the Charity's power to provide, the complainant will be advised of this as soon as possible in order to manage expectations about possible outcomes.

Details of the complaint must be recorded on the system for recording complaints. Where the complaint has been through the frontline resolution stage this must be shown in the complaints log. At the conclusion of the investigation the log must be updated to reflect the final outcome and any action taken in response to the complaint.

Timelines at Stage 2 Complaint Investigation –

complaints will be acknowledged in writing within three working days;
the Charity will provide a full response to the complaint as soon as possible, but not later than 20 working days from the time that the complaint was received for investigation.

Extension to the timeline - Not all investigations will be able to meet this deadline; for example, some complaints are so complex that they will require careful consideration and detailed investigation beyond the 20 working days timeline. Where there are clear and justifiable reasons for extending the timescale, senior management and Trustees will exercise judgement and will set time limits on any extended investigation, with the agreement of the complainant. If the complainant does not agree to an extension, but it is unavoidable and reasonable, then senior management must consider and confirm the extension. In such circumstances, the complainant must be kept updated on the reason for the delay and given a revised timescale for bringing the investigation to a conclusion.

Where an extension has been agreed, this will be recorded appropriately and the proportion of complaints that exceed the 20 working day-limit will be evident from report statistics.

Mediation and other dispute resolution options - Some complex complaints (where, for example, the complainant and/or other involved parties have become entrenched in their position) may benefit from a different approach to resolving the complaint. Using mediation can help both parties to understand what is driving the complaint and may be more likely to result in a mutually satisfactory conclusion being reached. Whilst the Charity does not have a formal mediation service, parties wishing to consider alternatives to complaint investigation should enquire about this with the investigator. Where other means of dispute resolution are attempted, the complaint investigation will be suspended pending the outcome. If the complaint is not resolved by alternative resolution techniques, complaint investigation will be resumed, and revised timescales will be agreed.

Closing the complaint at the Complaint Investigation stage - The outcome of the investigation will be communicated to the complainant in writing. The decision, and details of how and when it was communicated to the complainant, must be recorded on the system for recording complaints. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, there is recourse to the Charity Commission who will be able to advise on whether they may be able to assist. The charity Commission can be contacted at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

If we cannot resolve a fundraising complaint, a complainant can contact the Fundraising Regulator.

6.2 Governance of the Complaint Handling Procedure

Staff roles and responsibilities:

All staff will be aware of:

- The Complaints Policy and Procedure;

- how to handle and record complaints at the frontline resolution stage;
- who they can refer a complaint to if they are unable to handle the matter personally;
- the need to try and resolve complaints early and with Youth Work Manager as possible and;
- their clear authority to attempt to resolve any complaints they may be called upon to deal with.

Youth work Manager and Trustees will ensure that:

- the Charity's final position on a complaint investigation is signed off by an appropriate Trustee in order to provide assurance that this is the definitive response of the Charity and that the complainant's concerns have been taken seriously;
- it maintains overall responsibility and accountability for the management and governance of complaints handling within the Charity;
- it has an active role in, and understanding of, the Complaints Policy and Procedure (although not necessarily involved in the decision-making process of complaints handling)
- complaints information is used to improve services, and this is clearly evident from/at regular staff updates.

Investigations Manager - reports to the director responsible for the manager and is responsible for receiving and acknowledging complaints at the Complaint Investigation stage. The Investigations Manager checks a complaint initially to ensure that they are within time and jurisdiction, refers them for frontline resolution if this has not been attempted and seems appropriate, and is responsible for the complaint investigation bearing in mind the need to avoid any possible conflict of interest. The chair of trustees is also responsible (in consultation with senior management as necessary) for signing off the Investigation Report and for ensuring that

- a. individuals affected by the report are notified of the outcome as appropriate
- b. case-specific remedial action and/or process improvement for the future are drawn to the attention of the relevant area(s).

The chair of trustees is responsible for the conduct of the complaint investigation and is involved in the co-ordination of all aspects of the response to the complainant. This may include preparing a comprehensive written report, including details of any recommended procedural changes to service delivery. They have a clear remit to investigate effectively and reach robust decisions on more complex complaints. This also requires clear direction and support from senior management on the extent and limits of discretion and responsibilities in investigating and resolving complaints, including the ability to identify failings, take effective remedial action and issue an apology, where it is appropriate to do so.

6.3 Recording complaints

To collect suitable data, it is essential that all complaints are recorded in sufficient detail. The minimum requirements are as follows:

- name and contact details of the complainant
- date of receipt of the complaint
- how the complaint was received
- category of complaint
- staff member responsible for handling the complaint
- department to which the complaint relates, including member(s) of staff/volunteer/trustee any

complaint may relate to

- action taken and outcome at frontline resolution stage

- date the complaint was closed at the frontline resolution stage
- date the investigation stage was initiated (if applicable)
- action taken and outcome at investigation stage (if applicable)
- date the complaint was closed at the investigation stage (if applicable)
- underlying cause and remedial action taken (if applicable)
- response times at each stage

Learning from complaints

Complaint Investigators will always try to ensure that all parties involved understand the findings of the investigation and any decisions made. Senior management will ensure that the Charity has procedures in place to act on issues that are identified. These procedures facilitate:

- using complaints data to identify the root cause of complaints;
- taking action to reduce the chance of this happening again;
- recording the details of corrective action in the complaints file;
- systematically reviewing complaints performance reports to improve performance.

The analysis of management reports detailing complaints performance will help to ensure that any trends or wider issues which may not be obvious from individual complaints are quickly identified and addressed.

Where the Charity identifies the need for service improvement:

- a target date will be set for the action to be implemented, and followed up on to ensure delivery within this timescale;
- where appropriate, performance in the service area will be monitored to ensure that the issue has been resolved.

6.4 Maintaining confidentiality

Complaints will be handled with discretion and access to information about individual investigations will only be shared with those who have a legitimate access requirement. In determining access requirements the Charity will have regard to legislative requirements; for example, data protection regulations and freedom of information legislation and also internal policies on confidentiality and the use of complainant information.

Information about individual complaints will only be shared with those who need access for a legitimate Charity purpose. This includes staff investigating and responding to the complaint.

Where possible, members of staff should be informed if a complaint has been made about them or actions for which they were responsible. Train has a duty of care to staff complained about as well as to complainants. We will ensure members of staff have an opportunity to respond to the allegations made, where appropriate.