



ANCHOREACH C.I.C.

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Policy Owner: Anchoreach C.I.C.

Approved by: Board of Directors

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1. Policy Statement

2. Purpose of the Policy

3. Who Can Make a Complaint?

4. What Can Be Complained About?

5. Our Complaints Principles

6. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made:

- In person.
- By telephone.
- By email.
- In writing.
- Through a member of staff or volunteer.
- Through a representative or advocate where appropriate.

A complaint should provide, where possible:

- The name and contact details of the person making the complaint.
- What happened.
- When and where it happened.
- Who was involved.
- Why the person is dissatisfied.
- What outcome they would like to see.

A complaint does not need to be written in a particular format.

Staff should offer reasonable assistance to individuals who may have difficulty making a complaint.

7. Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, complaints should initially be resolved informally.

A member of staff or manager may:

- Listen to the concern.
- Clarify what has happened.
- Explain any relevant information.
- Apologise where appropriate.
- Take immediate corrective action.
- Agree a practical solution.

Informal resolution should only be used where appropriate and where the person making the complaint is comfortable with this approach.

Serious complaints should not be inappropriately dealt with informally.

8. Formal Complaints Procedure

If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, or the individual wishes to make a formal complaint, the following procedure will apply.

Stage 1 – Receipt of Complaint

The complaint will be recorded and passed to an appropriate manager or Director.

The person making the complaint will normally receive acknowledgement within **5 working days**.

The acknowledgement should confirm:

- That the complaint has been received.
 - Who will deal with it.
 - What the next steps are.
 - When the complainant can expect a response.
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Stage 2 – Investigation

An appropriate person will investigate the complaint.

The investigator should, where possible, be independent of the issue being complained about.

The investigation may include:

- Speaking with the complainant.
- Speaking with staff, volunteers or other relevant people.
- Reviewing records and documentation.
- Reviewing emails or other relevant communications.
- Examining relevant policies and procedures.
- Reviewing CCTV where appropriate and lawful.
- Considering any evidence provided by the complainant.

All parties should be given a reasonable opportunity to provide relevant information.

Stage 3 – Outcome

Following the investigation, the complainant will receive a written response where appropriate.

The response will normally explain:

- The complaint being considered.
- The information or evidence reviewed.
- The findings of the investigation.
- Whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.
- Any action being taken.
- Any improvements identified.
- How to request a review or appeal if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

We will aim to provide a formal response within **20 working days** of receiving the complaint.

Where a complaint is more complex and this timescale cannot reasonably be met, the complainant will be informed of the delay and given an expected timescale.

9. Complaint Outcomes

A complaint may be:

Upheld

The investigation finds that the complaint is substantially supported by the available evidence.

Partially Upheld

Some elements of the complaint are supported, while others are not.

Not Upheld

The available evidence does not support the complaint.

Even where a complaint is not upheld, Anchoreach C.I.C. may identify improvements or learning as a result of the investigation.

10. Stage 4 – Review or Appeal

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request a review.

The request should normally be made within **10 working days** of receiving the outcome.

The request should explain:

- Why the complainant believes the decision was incorrect.
- Any new relevant information.
- Any concerns about how the original investigation was conducted.

The review should normally be undertaken by a Director who was not responsible for the original investigation, where reasonably possible.

The review will consider whether:

- The original complaint was properly investigated.
- Relevant information was considered.
- The correct procedures were followed.
- The outcome was reasonable based on the available evidence.

The final response will normally be provided within **20 working days** of receiving the review request.

11. Complaints About a Director

Where a complaint concerns a Director, that Director should not be responsible for investigating or determining the complaint.

The complaint should be referred to another Director who has no conflict of interest.

Where the complaint concerns the whole Board or there is a significant conflict of interest, Anchoreach C.I.C. may seek an appropriately independent person or external advice to support the investigation.

12. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered where sufficient information is provided to allow the organisation to investigate.

However, it may not be possible to provide an outcome or ask follow-up questions where the complainant cannot be identified.

Anonymous complaints may still be used to identify potential risks, trends or areas for improvement.

13. Complaints About Safeguarding

Where a complaint raises a safeguarding concern involving a child, young person or vulnerable adult, the matter must be referred immediately to the organisation's safeguarding lead.

The safeguarding procedures will take priority over the normal complaints procedure where appropriate.

Information may be shared with relevant safeguarding agencies or emergency services where necessary to protect an individual from harm.

14. Complaints Involving Staff or Volunteers

Where a complaint concerns the conduct of a member of staff or volunteer, the person concerned will be informed and given an appropriate opportunity to respond.

Complaints may result in further action under relevant disciplinary, volunteer management or other organisational procedures.

A complaint will not automatically result in disciplinary action.

15. Complaints Involving Discrimination or Harassment

Complaints involving discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation will be taken seriously.

Anchoreach C.I.C. will investigate such complaints in accordance with this policy and the organisation's **Equality and Diversity Policy**.

Where appropriate, reasonable measures may be taken to protect the person making the complaint while the matter is investigated.

16. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

Anchoreach C.I.C. recognises that people may become frustrated when raising concerns. This does not mean that a complaint is unreasonable.

However, the organisation may take proportionate steps where a person:

- Makes repeated complaints about the same issue after the matter has been fully investigated.
- Makes abusive, threatening or discriminatory communications.
- Makes unreasonable demands on staff time or resources.
- Refuses to accept a final decision without providing new relevant information.
- Deliberately provides false or misleading information.

Any restriction on communication will be reasonable, proportionate and approved by an appropriate Director.

A person will not be labelled as unreasonable simply because they make a complaint or challenge a decision.

17. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Complaints will be handled confidentially wherever possible.

Information will only be shared where there is a legitimate reason to do so, including where:

- It is necessary to investigate the complaint.
- There is a safeguarding concern.
- There is a legal requirement.
- Disclosure is necessary to protect someone from serious harm.

All personal information will be handled in accordance with Anchoreach C.I.C.'s **Data Protection and GDPR Policy**.

18. Record Keeping

Anchoreach C.I.C. will maintain an appropriate record of formal complaints.

Records may include:

- Date received.
- Nature of the complaint.
- Person responsible for investigating.
- Evidence considered.
- Actions taken.
- Outcome.
- Any appeal or review.
- Lessons learned.
- Improvements made.

Records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with the organisation's data protection and record-retention requirements.

19. Monitoring Complaints

The Directors will periodically review complaints to identify:

- Common issues.
- Repeated concerns.
- Service improvements required.
- Training needs.
- Equality and accessibility issues.
- Risks to participants, staff or volunteers.
- Changes needed to policies or procedures.

Complaint information may be included in internal reports or governance reviews in an anonymised form.

20. Learning and Improvement

Anchoreach C.I.C. will use complaints as an opportunity to improve.

Where a complaint identifies a weakness, the organisation may:

- Change a procedure.
- Provide additional staff or volunteer training.
- Improve communication.
- Make reasonable adjustments.
- Review a service or activity.
- Update a policy.
- Increase supervision or monitoring.
- Introduce preventative measures.

Where appropriate, the complainant will be informed about improvements resulting from their complaint.

21. Protection from Victimisation

No person should experience disadvantage, bullying, harassment or victimisation because they have raised a genuine complaint.

Any allegation of victimisation will be taken seriously and may be investigated separately.

22. External Complaints

Anchoreach C.I.C. will aim to resolve complaints internally wherever possible.

Where a complaint relates to a service commissioned, funded or regulated by another organisation, the complainant may also have the right to raise the matter with the relevant external organisation.

Where appropriate, Anchoreach C.I.C. will provide information about relevant external complaint or review routes.

23. Responsibilities

Board of Directors

The Board is responsible for ensuring that the organisation has an effective complaints process and that significant complaints are appropriately reviewed.

Managers

Managers are responsible for responding to concerns, ensuring complaints are recorded and supporting investigations.

Staff and Volunteers

Staff and volunteers must listen respectfully to concerns, report complaints appropriately and cooperate with investigations.

Complaints Investigator

The investigator must act fairly, objectively and without conflicts of interest.

24. Staff Procedure – Quick Reference

When a complaint is received:

1. **Listen** – allow the person to explain their concern.
 2. **Remain calm and respectful** – do not argue or become defensive.
 3. **Check immediate safety** – escalate safeguarding concerns immediately.
 4. **Record the concern** – make an accurate factual record.
 5. **Notify the appropriate manager or Director.**
 6. **Consider informal resolution** where appropriate.
 7. **Escalate to the formal complaints process** if required.
 8. **Investigate fairly** and gather relevant evidence.
 9. **Provide an outcome** within the appropriate timescale.
 10. **Record learning and actions** arising from the complaint.
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25. Complaints Flowchart

Concern raised

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Can it be resolved informally?

→ **Yes:** Resolve, record where appropriate and monitor.

→ **No:** Proceed to formal complaint.

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Complaint acknowledged

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Investigation undertaken

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Outcome provided

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Complainant satisfied?

→ **Yes:** Close complaint and record learning.

→ **No:** Review/appeal requested.

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Independent review where reasonably possible

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Final response

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Actions and organisational learning implemented

26. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually or sooner where:

- There are significant changes to legislation.
- There are changes to organisational services.
- A serious complaint identifies a need for review.
- Monitoring identifies repeated issues.
- Changes to best practice require amendments.

Feedback from staff, volunteers, participants and other stakeholders may be considered during the review.

27. Approval

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Position: Managing Director

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