

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that we handle complaints fairly, efficiently, and effectively. We recognise that occasionally someone, may be dissatisfied or concerned about their interactions with our organisation or the services it provides, and we hope that problems can be reconciled between the parties concerned.

If not, we will manage any complaint promptly, thoroughly, impartially, and sympathetically as per the details and procedures contained within this document.

All complaints will be dealt with in strict confidence.

This policy provides guidance to our volunteers and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers and Trustee Board members who may find themselves required to receive, initially respond to, investigate and / or resolve a complaint and ensure that learning/s are acted upon, and procedures revised and implemented to avoid further complaints in the future.

1.3 Organisational commitment

This organisation expects the Board of Trustees to be committed to fair, effective, and efficient complaint handling. The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Who	Commitment	How
The Director or Chair of the Board of Trustees.	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<p>Report to the Board of Trustees on our complaint handling.</p> <p>Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints.</p> <p>Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Encourage all volunteers to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.</p> <p>Support recommendations for improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.</p>
The Board of Trustees	Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices	<p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Assist people to make a complaint, if needed.</p> <p>Comply with our policy and associated procedures.</p> <p>Provide regular feedback to the Trustee members on issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Provide suggestions to the board on ways to improve our complaints management system.</p> <p>Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by the board of Trustees.</p>
All volunteers	Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices.	<p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Be aware of our complaint handling policies and procedures.</p> <p>Assist people who wish to make complaints access our complaints process.</p> <p>Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints to resolve matters promptly.</p>

2.0 How to complain.

See list of contacts at section 8.0 of this policy

We will endeavour to make the necessary reasonable adjustments in order to receive, investigate and respond to any complaint.

2.1 Informal Complaints

If an informal complaint is made (i.e., verbally, bringing an issue to our attention but not wanting to make a formal complaint), we will respond verbally within seven working days, either in a face-to-face meeting or telephone conversation. This will be recorded for our records, but we will not give a written response.

All formal complaints will receive a full, written response, as detailed in this document. In either case, complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly.

2.2 Timescales for making a complaint.

Complaints must be made not later than one month of the event leading to the complaint or of you becoming aware of a cause for complaint.

However, Aspire2Succeed recognises that each case must be judged individually and therefore it might still be possible to investigate when there is good reason that a complaint has not been made in the above timeframe.

2.1 Facilitating Complaints.

People focus.

We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, and complaint handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame. (as in section 5.0 of this policy)

People making complaints will be:

- provided with information about our complaint handling process and how to access it.
- listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate,
- provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

No detriment to people making complaints.

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

Anonymous complaints

We accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

Accessibility

We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised, we will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/ or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish.

Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g., advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation)

2.2 Responding to complaints.

Early resolution

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with us. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

Responsiveness

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process.
- the expected time frames for our actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

Objectivity and fairness

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective, and unbiased manner.

We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. Internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

Responding flexibly

Our Trustees and Volunteers are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible.

We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

Confidentiality

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

Complaints will be handed in the strictest of confidence in accordance with the Charity's Data Protection Policy and will be kept separately to service user records. Care will be taken that information should only be disclosed to those who have a demonstrable need to have access to it.

2.3 Managing Complaints

Empowerment of Volunteers

All Volunteers managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.

Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time our success depends on:

- Our ability to perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible.
- The health, safety, and security of our Volunteers.
- Our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy. Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints.

We will inform anyone who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them (including any regulatory bodies).

3.0 The Complaint Process

Level 1

We aim to resolve complaints at the first level. Volunteers, wherever possible will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training, and supervision.

Level 2

Where this is not possible, we may decide to escalate the complaint to a member of the Board of Trustees. This second level of complaint handling will provide for the following internal mechanisms:

- assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made, and/or
- facilitated resolution (where a person not connected with the complaint reviews the matter and attempts to find an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties).
- We will aim to give a final response to all complaints within 1 month from the date complaint was received.

Level 3

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of our review of their complaint, they may seek an external review of our decision (UK Charity Commission)

4.0 Accountability and learning

4.1 Analysis and evaluation of complaints

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by the Board of Trustee members.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of our service and make improvements.

4.2 Monitoring of the complaint management system

We will continually monitor our complaint management system to:

- ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints.
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system,

5. The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below.

5.1 Receive

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, we will record the complaint and its supporting information.

The record of the complaint will document:

- Contact information of the person making a complaint and the date received.
- Issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want.
- Any other relevant information, and
- Any additional support the person making a complaint requires.

5.2 Acknowledge

We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within 5 working days. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g., email, letter) for communicating with the person making a complaint.

Assess and investigate.

5.3 Initial assessment

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed. When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- How serious, complicated, or urgent the complaint is.
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety
- How the person making the complaint is being affected
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

5.4 Investigating the complaint.

After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it. We may:

- Give the person making a complaint information or an explanation.
- Gather information about the issue, person, or area that the complaint is about, or
- Investigate the claims made in the complaint.

We will keep the person making the complaint up to date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays. We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and consider any statutory requirements.

5.5 Determine outcome and provide reasons for decision.

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:

- The outcome of the complaint and any action we took.
- The reason/s for our decision
- The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
- Any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal review, external review, or appeal.

6 Close the complaint: document and analyse data.

6.1 Document

We will keep records about:

- How we managed the complaint
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations).
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes.

6.2 Analyse data

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented and monitored.

7.0 Associated Documents

- Aspire22Succeed Volunteers Code of conduct policy
- Aspre2Succeed Data Protection Policy
- Aspire2Succeed Safeguarding Policy

8.0 Contacts

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS

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Director, Mentor, Staff Training, Academic Programme Lead. Safeguarding Lead & Mentor Supervision & Support Lead

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OTHER CONTACT NUMBERS

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Charity Commission 0300 066 9197

Fundraising Regulator 03009993407