

# Complaints Policy & Procedure

## Introduction

This policy relates to complaints made against Whistlewood Common Limited, its members, and volunteers.

Whistlewood Common Limited strives towards creating a culture which encourages people to:

- speak up if they think that something is wrong.
- listen to other people's opinions and complaints.
- look for solutions to problems rather than apportion blame.
- work together to improve what we do.

We will work to ensure that people have a range of ways in which they can comment about our services and be supported in raising concerns informally. However, we acknowledge that people have a right to make a formal complaint, and this policy aims to outline for anyone who uses our services, how we will manage that process. Every effort will be made to try and resolve any problem as soon as possible but if it is necessary to take matters further this will be done in line with our complaint's procedures below.

## Principles

### Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Whistlewood Common Limited.

The opportunity to make a complaint or raise a grievance is an essential right for anyone who uses Whistlewood Common Limited. However, this policy is primarily aimed at those services, events, workshops, etc, that are wholly provided by Whistlewood Common Limited.

Complaints or grievances arising from a third-party provider (an event, workshop, private hire, etc. provided by a hirer) should be addressed directly to that provider. A note of the complaint/grievance should be passed to Whistlewood Common Limited for information.

Complaints can be a valuable way of evaluating and improving our services and ensuring that they are responsive to people's needs.

Whistlewood Common Limited aims to ensure that our complaints procedure is speedy, effective, and easily understandable.

We will ensure that people are made aware of this policy, have access to it and our complaints leaflet. We will ensure that everyone interacting with us is aware of the Complaints Procedure.

If a person makes a complaint, we will ensure that they are informed of the progress of their complaint, how we propose to resolve any problems arising and keep them informed. We will make every effort to ensure that the process is accessible and accommodate any difficulties they may have in communicating their complaint.

Whistlewood Common Limited recognises that a person may find making a complaint difficult and it can be stressful. Appropriate assistance will be given and at any stage the person can seek the help of a friend, relative or independent advocate. As it may not be appropriate for a Whistlewood Common Limited advocate to offer this support we will provide information about any other advocacy services that are available for this if requested.

A complaint can also be stressful for a person against whom a complaint is made. It is important that they also receive assistance and support, and we will give them a full opportunity to respond to the complaint against them.

If a complaint has a financial or legal consequence for Whistlewood Common Limited, we may be required to seek advice from our insurers or legal advisors. In such circumstances it may be necessary for us to cease direct contact with the complainant and refer them to another agency for support and advice.

Whistlewood Common Limited will deal with complaints sensitively and confidentially, respecting both the confidentiality of the complainant and any person(s) referenced within the complaint. However, in some circumstances, for example under our **Confidentiality Policy**, or for us to investigate thoroughly and take actions because of the complaint, it may not always be possible for us to keep everything confidential.

If we do have to breach confidentiality, we will seek permission for this, except in circumstances where it is deemed that seeking permission in advance would increase the potential risk of harm. In addition, if the risk is deemed significant, we may have to act even if permission is withheld.

Any complaint must be made **within 3 months** of the incident/situation. This is to ensure that we can conduct a proper investigation

Complaints may be in writing and be posted in the 'Complements, Comments & Complaints' box situated under the shelter or via email to:

[board@whistlewoodcommon.org](mailto:board@whistlewoodcommon.org)

All complaints should be marked as 'CONFIDENTIAL - COMPLAINT'

The number and type of complaints will be monitored by the Board of Whistlewood Common Limited. We may also be required to provide funding agencies or stakeholders with a report on complaints as part of their evaluation of our services. No personal details will be shared with these agencies.

## **Complaints Procedure**

### **Stage 1**

#### **Informal Discussion:**

We will make every effort to listen carefully to anyone who has a complaint and discuss their concerns. A Board Member, Safeguarding Lead or a Whistlewood activity/events organiser may be asked to help to resolve the matter informally. If a person is happy and wants to deal with the matter informally, we will feed the general concerns into reviews and evaluations of our services so we can make any improvements necessary (this will be recorded and tracked on our complaints log).

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Where the complaint is about a third-party provider, we will try to facilitate contact with that party.

The complainant/s will receive a definitive response to their complaint within four weeks. If this is not possible a progress report will be given with an indication of when a full response will be given.

If the matter is not resolved informally the second stage should commence.

We will ensure that the person is directed to our 'Comments, Compliments & Complaints' leaflet (available at [www.whistlewoodcommon.org.uk](http://www.whistlewoodcommon.org.uk)) or they may request this in an alternative format. This details the formal stages to follow in an accessible format.

### **Stage 2**

A formal complaint in writing should be sent as follows:

A complaint about Whistlewood Common site or a wholly provided service/activity/event, should be communicated either in writing to:

The Board, Whistlewood Common Limited, The Common, Melbourne, Derby, DE73 8DH

or by email to: [board@whistlewoodcommon.org](mailto:board@whistlewoodcommon.org)

This needs to be marked as 'CONFIDENTIAL - COMPLAINT'

A complaint concerning a Board member should be communicated either in writing to: Chair of the Board, Whistlewood Common Limited, The Common, Melbourne, Derby, DE73 8DH

or by email to: [board@whistlewoodcommon.org](mailto:board@whistlewoodcommon.org) marking it FAO: Chair of the board

This needs to be marked as 'CONFIDENTIAL - COMPLAINT'

A complaint about the Chair of the Board should be communicated either in writing to: Vice Chair or Secretary of the board. Whistlewood Common Limited, The Common, Melbourne, Derby, DE73 8DH

or via email: [board@whistlewoodcommon.org](mailto:board@whistlewoodcommon.org) marking the email FAO of the Vice Chair.

This needs to be marked as 'CONFIDENTIAL- COMPLAINT'

The board member receiving the complaint will:

- Keep a written record of the date, details of the complaint and contact details of the person making the complaint.
- Ensure that the complaint falls under the remit of this policy.
- If the complaint is not covered by our procedure, the complainant must be informed of the reasons why we cannot investigate the matter and signposted to a more appropriate place or person.

If the complaint is covered by our procedure the matter will be investigated as swiftly and fully as possible.

A nominated board member will be asked to investigate the complaint they will:

- Respond to the complainant within 5 working days. This may only be an acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint.
- Pay attention to maintaining confidentiality and making a record of all actions and findings throughout the whole process.
- Aim to report the findings to the complainant and board members within **four weeks**. If it is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why extra time is needed.

- Report the substance of the complaint to the Board or Chair of the Board as appropriate, so that they are aware of the matter and any issues that it touches upon can be reviewed to improve the services that we offer.

All complainants can approach an independent organisation for advice or take their complaint further (Stage 3 - External)

## **Stage 3**

### **External**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after the Stage 2, they have the right to seek legal advice or direct their complaint to an appropriate ombudsman who may be able to provide this service.

### **Record Keeping and Privacy**

Records of complaints and investigations will be kept securely for one year from the date they have been concluded unless we have been legally advised otherwise.

### **Implementation and Monitoring**

The monitoring of this policy and its implementation is the responsibility of the Board of Whistlewood Common.

The Board of Whistlewood Common is responsible for reviewing complaints on an annual basis and will provide briefings for members and volunteers as necessary so that they understand the implications of the policy.

**Approved: WW Board GT,AC,PJ,RD,FG,CG**

**DATE: 24/07/2025**