



# Policy

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## COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

<b>Version:</b>	1.0		
<b>Effective date:</b>	6 December 2021		
<b>Purpose:</b>	To enable individuals to have their complaints considered and, as far as possible, resolved promptly and fairly.		
<b>Scope:</b>	All staff and volunteers of FRP		
<b>Associated Policies, Guidelines and Procedures:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volunteering policy</li><li>• Whistleblowing policy</li><li>• Data protection policy</li><li>• Recruitment policy (Employee, Contractor &amp; Trustees)</li><li>• Communication policy</li><li>• Equal opportunities policy</li></ul>		
<b>Approved by:</b>	FRP Trustees	Date:	2021
<b>Last Amended:</b>	December 2021		
<b>Next Review:</b>	December 2023		

### Data Protection

Personal data will be processed in accordance with the requirements of GDPR and in compliance with the data protection principles specified in the legislation.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Purpose**

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use.
- To ensure that anyone wishing to make a complaint knows how to do so and those receiving and handling complaints understand how to manage the process.
- To ensure that all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To ensure that complaints, wherever possible, are resolved promptly and that relationships are maintained.
- To gather information to help us improve what we do.

### **1.2. Definitions**

- A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the Charity.
- Complaints may come from any organisation or person who we contact about our work, from a volunteer or member of staff within the Charity, or from any other person or organisation with an interest in the Charity and its activities.
- All complaints must be made in writing following the procedure set out in this policy.

## **2. RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 2.1.** The Charity will record the progress of all material complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, whether the complaint was resolved and the final outcome.
- 2.2.** All material will be treated as confidential and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint. This is except where the Secretary of State (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or under the terms of Data Protection legislation.

## **3. RESPONSIBILITY**

- 3.1.** Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees of the Charity.

## **4. POLICY REVIEW**

- 4.1.** This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as required.

## **5. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

- 5.1.** Complaints may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing.
- 5.2.** Contact details for this procedure can be found in Appendix 1.
- 5.3.** Verbal complaints may be made in person to any of the Charity's staff, volunteers, or Trustees.
- 5.4.** Volunteers who receive complaints are not expected to implement this procedure and should either direct the complainant to this policy or contact a member of the Board of Trustees as soon as possible.
- 5.5.** Complaints can also be made directly to the Charity Commission or, if the complaint relates to the use of the complainant's personal information by the Charity, to the Information Commissioner's Office (the ICO) (see section 9).

## **6. RECEIVING COMPLAINTS**

- 6.1.** The vast majority of complaints can be resolved informally (Stage 1). Should this not be possible, a complaint can be moved to Stage 2 which involves a formal investigation led by the Board of Trustees.
- 6.2.** Complaints received by telephone or in person should be recorded in as much detail as possible by the person receiving the complaint. The receiver should:
- write down the facts of the complaint. Try to stick to facts and avoid judgement
  - take the complainant's name, address, telephone number and email address
  - note down the relationship of the complainant to the Charity
  - tell the complainant that the Charity has a complaints procedure
  - tell the complainant what will happen next and approximately how long it will take
  - where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.
- 6.3.** Written complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within seven working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.
- 6.4.** For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see Appendix 2.

## **7. RESOLVING COMPLAINTS**

### **STAGE 1 - INFORMAL PROCEDURE**

- 7.1.** In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate, recording the outcome in writing.
- 7.2.** The person contacted about the complaint may be able to:
- offer an explanation of how the situation arose leading to the concern
  - offer a resolution of the concern
  - help the complainant to identify what resolution they are looking for
  - accept the concern and pass it on to another person more suited to dealing with it. In this case, the complainant will be given a time within which that person will contact them with help.
- 7.3.** The person dealing with a concern should:
- attempt to resolve the complaint directly with the complainant either verbally or in writing and make sure the complainant is clear about any action agreed, putting it in writing if necessary;
  - pass on the details of the complaint to the Chair of Trustees within seven working days and make a written record of it;
  - check that the complainant is satisfied with the outcome;
  - if the complainant is not satisfied, ask them if they wish to take their complaint to Stage 2 and send them a copy of the complaints policy.

### **STAGE 2 PROCEDURE - FORMAL**

- 7.4.** If the complaint cannot be resolved informally or the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, the process moves to Stage 2.
- The complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Trustees.
  - The Chair of Trustees will log the complaint and the Board of Trustees will investigate the complaint.

- The Trustees will ensure the procedures are followed and the complaint is dealt with appropriately.

**7.5.** The Trustees will endeavour to carry out an investigation and respond to the complaint within four weeks. If this is not possible – because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed – a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

**7.6.** Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

**7.7.** The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Trustees decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

## **8. VARIATION**

**8.1.** The Board of Trustees may vary this procedure if it has good reason for doing so, such as a conflict of interest.

## **9. COMPLAINTS TO A REGULATOR**

**9.1.** A complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on its website.

**9.2.** If the complaint relates to the use of the complainant's personal information by FORP the complainant may complain to the ICO. Information about the kind of complaints the ICO can involve itself in and how it deals with complaints can be found on its website.

**9.3.** In the event a regulator receives a complaint in relation to the Charity, the Charity will cooperate with that regulator as appropriate.

## **10. MONITORING AND LEARNING**

**10.1.** Complaints shall be reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Contact details**

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Email: [chair@rowntreepark.org.uk](mailto:chair@rowntreepark.org.uk)

Postal:

Telephone:

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Practical guidance for handling verbal complaints**

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation.
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam".
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry.
- Show an interest in what is being said.
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details.
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary.
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) – you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation – e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you".
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise.
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue.
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver.
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told.
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.

