

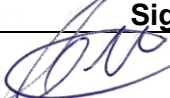


Totton & Eling Community Association Complaints Procedure

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Complaints Procedure

1. Document Control

Version	Action/Next Review Date	Date	Signed
Issue 01	Created	28/04/21	 C D Compton

2. Introduction

Totton & Eling Community Association (the CA) takes complaints seriously. Complaints give us the opportunity to put things right and the lessons learned can often influence our practices. We know we are not perfect but seek to demonstrate continuous improvement. That is why we have a Complaints Procedure. Sometimes we can put things right; sometimes we can only explain ourselves and apologise. But we do want to learn from our mistakes. What you tell us helps us to improve our service.

It is hoped that customer and third-party dissatisfaction can be remedied locally on an informal basis by the Centre Administrators. Some people, however, prefer to pursue their complaint on an official footing. The organisation, therefore, has a structure to ensure that all complaints are handled within the same framework.

The complaints (or an expressions of dissatisfaction) process is for all complainants - Staff, Volunteers, customers, third parties, and including those who have tried, but failed, to access our service.

3. Complaints procedure

If a written complaint arrives it will be reviewed by a Centre Administrator. In many cases, customers phone and speak directly to a Centre Administrator.

- Stage One: review by a Centre Administrator
- Stage Two: review under direction of the Trustees.

4. Stage One: review by a Centre Administrator

Once a complaint, which was not dealt with on the spot, has been received, a letter of acknowledgement must be sent to the complainant within 5 working days. The complainant must be told who is dealing with the complaint, what action is being taken, and when they can expect to receive a full reply - the target time for responding in full to a complaint is 20 working days.

The Centre Administrator will maintain a separate complaint monitoring file. Everything related to the complaint should be kept apart from any other notes (if any), and all correspondence and notes relating to the complaint should be



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attached to this separate file. The "complaints file" is strictly private to the Centre Administrators and Trustees.

The Centre Administrators should undertake the investigation. Where the complaint is against a member, volunteer, a Centre Administrator or a Trustee, the Chair or a designated member of the Trustees will investigate, in effect jumping straight to Stage Two. This may require an interview with the complainant or a member of staff or volunteer.

Once the investigation is complete, a letter detailing its findings shall be sent to the complainant. If the matter is complex and will take longer than originally indicated, the complainant should be informed, explaining the reasons including an indication of when a response can be expected.

The full response must contain sufficient information to assure the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously. If the complaint is upheld, the complainant must be given a full apology for their experience and given details, as far as possible, of what is being done to prevent a recurrence of the situation.

The letter must also inform complainants of their right to ask for a review of the investigation if they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage One and how to access this second stage.

5. Stage Two: review under the direction of the chair of Trustees

Customers who reject the initial reply and seek a further response should be asked to explain their points of disagreement to facilitate a comprehensive assessment.

The process to be followed in reviewing the complaint at Stage Two is similar to Stage One but now the lead person conducting the review will be the Chair of the Trustees or a designated Trustee or sub-committee. The same target timetable applies.

Stage Two referrals may mean that the initial investigation has not addressed the pivotal point of the complaint. The Chair of the Trustees must be sure that the review takes this into account and should ensure that the crux of the problem has been addressed.

Once again, the response to the complainant must contain an explanation, apology if required, information about remedial actions, and satisfactory assurances that the complaint has been investigated fully. The decision of the Trustees being final.

6. Checklist for the investigation



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- Check if there have been any previous complaints from this person.
- Contact the complainant to clarify the complaint and outcome sought, and to explain the limitations of the outcomes available to the complainant from the procedure at each stage.
- If financial loss has been incurred, the advice of the relevant insurance company must be sought. Customers who claim that the advice given them has resulted in financial loss should be advised to seek independent legal advice. A complaint cannot be handled by the CA at the same time as a legal action is being pursued against it. However, once any legal action is resolved, there may be aspects of the original complaint that remain to be addressed.
- Check whether the complainant needs support - for example, interpretation and language services, advocacy, access to induction loops etc.
- Brief yourself on the background to the complaint and obtain relevant documents. Ask the complainant if there is anything they wish to add.
- Consider whether the CA needs to seek legal advice before proceeding.
- Conduct any interviews in as informal and relaxed a manner as possible.
- Separate hearsay from fact.
- Draft a report setting out the evidence together with your conclusion.
- Ensure that no person undertaking the investigation is implicated in the complaint.

7. Third-party complaints

These may come from a variety of sources - for example, a funder, trader or an organisation, with the complaint deriving from advice, action or behaviour by the CA.

These complaints are expected to be managed by and within the CA (on the lines of Stage One and Stage Two of this Complaints Procedure with the decision of the Trustees being final.

8. Complaints by staff or volunteers against their treatment in the organisation

Should be dealt with under the CA's [Grievance Policy and Procedures](#) for staff and volunteers.

9. Complaints by Trustees, Staff or Volunteers about the quality and safety of services

Sometimes, staff and/or volunteers are concerned about practices which give rise to grave concern about the quality or safety of services provided or a situation which has the potential to bring the organisation into disrepute.



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Staff who raise such concerns have the right to make a protected disclosure (sometimes known as “whistleblowing”). See the [CA’s Whistleblowing Policy](#) for more details.