

Hextol Foundation Complaints Policy

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Introduction

We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at Hextol knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved, appropriate recompense is made and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the Hextol Foundation' operations, including (but not limited to): the goods and services it provides to customers; the way in which volunteers are treated; the conduct of staff and volunteers etc

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any individual, volunteer or organisation who has a legitimate interest in The Hextol Foundation, including the general public if something is perceived to be improper. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should refer to Hextol's internal policy and procedure on such matters.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know, following any relevant data protection requirements and in accordance with GDPR and our privacy notice.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees of Hextol Foundation who will receive a report of all complaints made under this Policy at each meeting.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Hextol Foundation Complaints Procedure

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be made

- In writing to Hextol Foundation, 14c Gilesgate, Hexham, NE46 3NJ
- By e-mail to bruce.howorth@hextol.org.uk.
- Verbally by phone to 01434605253
- In person to any of Hextol Foundation's staff or Trustees

The complaints policy, along with this procedure shall be publicly available on Hextol's website.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through the publicised details listed above or through any other means the complainant may have, such as social media.

Complaints received by telephone or in person must be recorded in writing. This record can be made by any member of staff.

The person who receives a complaint by phone or in person should:

- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Write down the facts of the complaint and the date it was made
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Hextol e.g. customer, volunteer, support staff, parent, funder, member of the public etc
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure and how to access it, offering to send them a copy if they require it
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and 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

Resolving Complaints

Stage One

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. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the CEO within five working days.

On receiving the complaint, the CEO ensures it has been recorded. If it has not already been resolved, the CEO may delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

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

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within five 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. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within one calendar month. 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.

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 (to the extent the CEO deems appropriate given, for example, issues of fairness and confidentiality).

Replies to the complaint should be made in the form preferred by the complainant, but where this is by telephone it should be followed up in writing or by email wherever possible, or a detailed contemporaneous record made of the reply.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed by the CEO (unless the CEO has dealt with the complaint at Stage One, in which case the complainant may proceed directly to Stage Three).

Such a request should be made within 7 days of receipt by the complainant of the findings of the Stage One investigation into the complaint. If the request is not made in that period it may, at the CEO's discretion, be rejected.

The CEO will acknowledge the request for review of the complaint within five working days and will investigate the facts or delegate the matter to an appropriate senior person who has not previously been involved in the process. When acknowledging the CEO will inform the complainant who is dealing with the complaint.

The CEO's investigation may involve reviewing the paperwork relating to the complaint and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of developments.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month of Stage Two being triggered. 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. Whether the complaint is upheld 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 (to the extent the CEO deems appropriate given, for example, issues of fairness and confidentiality).

Stage Three

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage Two, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Trustee level.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to a Trustee. The request for Trustee level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Trustee to whom the complaint is passed may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the people who have previously dealt with the complaint. Those people should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. 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. Whether the complaint is upheld 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. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board of Trustees decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External Stage

As Hextol Foundation is a registered charity, the complainant may refer an appropriate complaint to the Charity Commission at any time. Information as to the type of complaints which the Charity Commission may deal with can be found on their website.

Outcomes

The person dealing with the complaint shall, at the conclusion of their investigation, and if the complaint is upheld, recommend appropriate action to be taken. If this recommendation includes a financial payment this must be approved by the CEO.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The CEO or Board of Trustees may vary this procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the CEO, or a particular trustee should not also have the CEO or trustee complained about leading the investigation at any stage.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

It is essential for the growth of the organisation that the outcome of a complaint is reviewed and any actions identified to avoid similar issues arising are implemented. In addition, complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.