## Complaints policy

Most complaints are best resolved informally wherever possible, often in discussion with a member of the Cross-Links team or trustees. However, where an issue cannot be resolved informally it will be dealt with under the formal procedure outlined below. In all cases it is important to deal with issues fairly and objectively without unreasonable delay.

As we are a small organisation there may be no alternative person to raise a complaint with and so all complaints will be treated fairly and objectively even if the complaint is about the person handling the complaint. In such cases, a complaint can sometimes be taken as personal criticism – care should be taken to receive the complaint in a calm and objective manner, consider it impartially and be fair towards the person who is seeking a resolution to the problem.

### The Complaint Procedure

#### Try to resolve the complaint informally

The complaint should be made without unreasonable delay to the activity leader or another appropriate member of the team. If the complaint is made during an activity then it is best to speak with the activity leader rather than with one of the activity assistants or club helpers. If the complaint is about the activity leader, then the complaint should be made in writing to the chair of trustees (see below).

#### Let us know about your complaint in writing (the formal stage begins)

You must put your complaint in writing to the activity leader or chair of trustees providing the following information:

* Your name and contact details
* Details of your complaint
* What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint (who did you speak to and what was the response you received)
* What actions do you feel might resolve the problem

The activity leader or chair of trustees will acknowledge receipt of your complaint.

Investigating the complaint

The activity leader or chair of trustees will investigate your complaint without unreasonable delay; they may nominate someone else to carry out the investigation on their behalf. The person investigating the complaint will make sure that they:

* establish what has happened so far, and whohas been involved;
* clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
* meet with the person making the complaint or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
* clarify what the person making the complaint feels would put things right;
* consider interviewing anyone else involved in the matter including any witnesses, allowing them to be accompanied by a companion if they wish;
* conduct any such interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
* keep notes of any interview.

Decide on appropriate action

In deciding on the outcome it might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

* an apology;
* an explanation;
* an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
* an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
* an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
* an undertaking to review Cross-Links Dover policies in light of the complaint.

Please note than an admission that the situation could have been handled better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

You will be notified of the outcome of the investigation in writing without unreasonable delay. If you are not happy with the outcome then we will let you know how to make an appeal.

#### Making an appeal

Where a person making a complaint feels that their complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved they may write to the chair of trustees to appeal. They should state clearly why they felt the outcome was not resolved satisfactorily.

The appeal should be dealt with impartially and, wherever possible, by a person who has not previously been involved in the case. As we are a small organisation this may not always be possible.

The outcome of the appeal should be communicated to the person making the appeal without unreasonable delay. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

**Vexatious complaints**

There may be occasions when, despite following all the stages of the procedure, the person who made the complaint remains dissatisfied. If the person tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of trustees will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

A vexatious complaint is one that is pursued, regardless of its merits, solely to harass, annoy or subdue somebody; something that is unreasonable, without foundation, frivolous, repetitive, burdensome or unwarranted. In this instance the chair of trustees will inform the person in writing that they are dismissing their complaint on these grounds.