

Complaints Policy



1. Introduction

- 1.1.** The Eldonian Community Trust ("the Charity") is committed to maintaining the highest standards of accountability, integrity, and service. Feedback from stakeholders is vital to the continuous improvement of our work, and complaints are treated as a valuable opportunity to learn, develop, and strengthen relationships.
- 1.2.** This policy outlines the Charity's commitment to ensuring that any individual or organisation with a concern about the Charity's services, conduct, or decisions can raise those concerns in a safe, fair, and transparent manner.

2. Scope

- 2.1.** This policy applies to complaints raised by:
 - 2.1.1.** Beneficiaries
 - 2.1.2.** Members of the public/charity
 - 2.1.3.** Donors and supporters
 - 2.1.4.** Partner organisations
 - 2.1.5.** Funders
 - 2.1.6.** Other stakeholders engaging with the Charity
- 2.2.** This policy does not apply to:
 - 2.2.1.** Whistleblowing matters concerning serious wrongdoing or malpractice (covered under the Whistleblowing Policy)

3. What is a Complaint?

- 3.1.** A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about:
 - 3.1.1.** The Charity's services, operations, or activities
 - 3.1.2.** Decisions or omissions by the Charity
 - 3.1.3.** Conduct or behaviour of trustees, volunteers, or representatives
 - 3.1.4.** Breaches of the Charity's policies, including safeguarding, data protection, or equality commitments
 - 3.1.5.** The handling of previous complaints
- 3.2.** A complaint may be raised informally or formally and may be submitted verbally, in writing, or electronically.
- 3.3.** Complaints can be made by an individual or on behalf of someone else, provided the person giving the complaint has consent or legal authority to do so.

4. Principles of Handling Complaints

- 4.1.** The Charity will ensure that all complaints are:
 - 4.1.1.** Treated seriously and with respect
 - 4.1.2.** Handled promptly, objectively, and sensitively
 - 4.1.3.** Logged, investigated, and resolved appropriately
 - 4.1.4.** Responded to in a timely and courteous manner
 - 4.1.5.** Monitored to identify patterns or systemic issues
- 4.2.** Complainants will not be discriminated against or treated unfairly because they have made a complaint.
- 4.3.** Confidentiality will be respected and maintained in accordance with the Charity's Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR.

5. Making a Complaint

- 5.1.** Complaints should be raised within three months of the incident or concern, unless there is a good reason for the delay.
- 5.2.** Complaints may be submitted:
 - 5.2.1.** In writing to the Charity's Secretary or Chair of Trustees
 - 5.2.2.** By email to secretary@eldonian.org
 - 5.2.3.** Through the contact form on the Charity's official website
 - 5.2.4.** Verbally, which will be documented and confirmed with the complainant
- 5.3.** Complainants are encouraged to provide as much detail as possible, including:
 - 5.3.1.** The nature of the complaint
 - 5.3.2.** Dates, times, and locations
 - 5.3.3.** Names of individuals involved (if applicable)
 - 5.3.4.** Any supporting documents or evidence
 - 5.3.5.** Desired outcome or resolution

6. Complaints Process

6.1. Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- 6.1.1.** Where appropriate, complaints will be addressed informally by the relevant project lead, trustee, or representative.
- 6.1.2.** If the issue is resolved at this stage, no further action is required unless systemic issues are identified.

6.2. Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- 6.2.1.** If the complaint is not resolved informally or if the matter is serious, it should be submitted as a formal complaint.
- 6.2.2.** The Secretary to the Board (or a designated trustee) will:

- 6.2.2.1. Acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days
- 6.2.2.2. Appoint a suitable investigator
- 6.2.2.3. Review the matter thoroughly, speaking to all parties involved
- 6.2.2.4. Keep the complainant informed of progress
- 6.2.2.5. Issue a written response within 20 working days of acknowledgment

6.3. Stage 3: Appeal

- 6.3.1. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal in writing within 10 working days of the response.
- 6.3.2. The appeal will be reviewed by the Chair of Trustees (or another impartial senior trustee not involved in the original investigation).
- 6.3.3. The Chair (or another impartial senior trustee not involved in the original investigation) will issue a final written response within 10 further working days, outlining the findings and any actions taken.
- 6.3.4. The decision at this stage will be final.

7. Complex or Serious Complaints

- 7.1. For complaints involving allegations of criminal activity, safeguarding risks, financial misconduct, or reputational harm, the Charity may:
 - 7.1.1. Immediately report the matter to the police, Charity Commission, or safeguarding authorities
 - 7.1.2. Suspend individuals involved pending investigation
 - 7.1.3. Seek independent legal advice

8. Recording, Monitoring, and Learning

- 8.1. All formal complaints will be recorded in a Complaints Log maintained by the Secretary.
- 8.2. The log will include:
 - 8.2.1. Date received
 - 8.2.2. Complainant (if known)
 - 8.2.3. Nature of the complaint
 - 8.2.4. Actions taken and outcomes
- 8.3. The Board of Trustees will review complaints quarterly to:
 - 8.4. Monitor trends
 - 8.5. Identify recurring issues
 - 8.6. Recommend policy or procedural improvements
 - 8.7. Where appropriate, feedback will be used to revise training, service delivery, or policy.

9. Escalation to External Bodies

9.1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied after exhausting the Charity's internal complaints procedure, they may refer their concern to:

- 9.1.1.** The Charity Commission (for governance or serious misconduct)
- 9.1.2.** The Fundraising Regulator (if the complaint involves fundraising activities)
- 9.1.3.** The Information Commissioner's Office (if data protection is involved)
- 9.1.4.** Local authorities (for safeguarding or public health concerns)

10. Policy Review and Approval

10.1. This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees on Friday 9th May 2025 and will be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner if there are significant changes in law or best practice.