



West Heath Community Association

Complaints Procedure Policy

West Heath Community Association is a registered charity (no: 1124993)
and has limited liability being a company limited by guarantee
registered in England & Wales (no: 06570815)

Complaints Procedure Policy

This policy will be reviewed every two years or on an ongoing basis if required. West Heath Community Association will amend this policy, following consultations with the Community Centre Manager where appropriate.

Date of last review:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Change</i>
<i>March 2026</i>	<i>New document created.</i>
<i>April 2026</i>	<i>Approved by Board</i>

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1. Purpose of this Policy

This policy sets out how our community centre handles complaints from service users, visitors, volunteers, staff, and members of the public. We aim to respond to concerns fairly, promptly, and transparently, in line with UK law and best practice for voluntary and community organisations.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by the following UK legislation and standards:

- Equality Act 2010 – ensuring no discrimination in how complaints are handled.
- Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR – ensuring personal information is handled lawfully and securely.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 – ensuring concerns about safety are taken seriously.
- Safeguarding legislation (Children Act 1989/2004, Care Act 2014) – ensuring safeguarding concerns are escalated immediately.
- Charity Commission guidance (if applicable) – ensuring serious incidents are reported where required.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, trustees, contractors, and service users.

3. What Counts as a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about:

- The quality of our services or activities
- The behaviour or actions of staff, volunteers, or other users
- The safety, accessibility, or condition of the building
- How a decision was made
- How someone feels they were treated

Complaints may be made verbally, in writing, by email, or through an advocate.

4. Principles of Our Complaints Handling

We commit to:

- Accessibility – anyone can make a complaint without fear of disadvantage.
- Fairness – complaints are handled impartially and without discrimination.
- Confidentiality – information is shared only with those who need to know.
- Timeliness – we respond promptly at each stage.
- Learning – we use complaints to improve our services.

5. Safeguarding and Serious Concerns

If a complaint involves:

- Allegations of abuse
- Concerns about a child or vulnerable adult
- Criminal behaviour
- Serious health and safety risks

...it will be treated as a safeguarding or serious incident, not a standard complaint.

These must be escalated immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and, where required, to the local authority, police, or Charity Commission.

6. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- The complainant should raise the issue with a staff member or volunteer as soon as possible.
- We aim to resolve informal concerns within 5 working days.
- If the complainant is not satisfied, they may move to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

Complaints should be submitted in writing (email, letter, or form). Assistance will be provided for anyone who needs help to do this.

Process:

1. The complaint is acknowledged within 3 working days.
2. The Community Centre Manager investigates.
3. The complainant may be contacted for further information.
4. A written response is provided within 15 working days, outlining:
 - Findings
 - Any actions taken
 - Options for further escalation

If more time is needed, the complainant will be informed.

Stage 3: Appeal

If the complainant remains dissatisfied:

- They may request an appeal within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.
- The appeal will be reviewed by the Board of Directors not previously involved.
- A final written response will be issued within 20 working days.

This is the final stage of the centre's internal process.

7. External Escalation

If the complaint relates to:

- Safeguarding – escalate to the local authority or police.
- Charity governance – the Charity Commission may be contacted.
- Data protection – the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).
- Health and safety – the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

We will provide information on the appropriate external body if needed.

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- All complaint records are stored securely in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Information is kept only as long as necessary and shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.
- Complainants have the right to access their personal data.

9. Support for Complainants

We recognise that making a complaint can be difficult. Complainants may:

- Bring a friend, advocate, or support worker
- Request communication in accessible formats
- Ask for translation or interpretation support

We will make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

10. Monitoring and Learning

- Complaints are logged and reviewed regularly by management or trustees.
- Serious incidents are reported to the appropriate authorities.

11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation or operational needs change.