Complaints Policy

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Chief Executive Officer Chris Cook (Interim CEO)

Chair of Directors Daran Bennett

Signed

Date

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Policy Statement

Crawley Community Youth Service (CCYS) is committed to providing a high-quality and inclusive service. We recognise that, occasionally, things may not go as expected and we welcome feedback and complaints as an opportunity to learn, improve our services and put things right for the person or organisation raising the concern.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy for anyone to use 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 CCYS 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 and that relationships are repaired.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.
- To ensure staff have training around how to manage complaints.

We will also:

- Ensure that anyone raising a complaint is listened to fairly, respectfully and without prejudice.
- Ensure that people can raise complaints without fear or unfair treatment or disadvantage.
- Make reasonable adjustments to support people who may have difficulty accessing or using the complaints procedure.
- Ensure that young people are supported to raise concerns in a way that is appropriate to their age, if under 18.
- Ensure that complaints are handled impartially and that everyone involved has an appropriate opportunity to share their views.

<u>Definition of a Complaint</u>

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of CCYS, its services, activities, decisions, conduct or the way in which someone has been treated.

This may include dissatisfaction about:

- The quality or standard or services provided by CCYS.
- The behaviour or conduct of staff, volunteers, trustees or representatives.
- Decisions made by CCYS or the way those decisions have been communicated.
- Delays, communication or failure to follow agreed procedures

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in CCYS, including young people, youth workers, club leaders, youth clubs in our membership, external facilitators, activity or other venues, service suppliers, parents and carers, members of the public or other organisations.

Complaints can be made verbally, by telephone, by email, by letter or in person. People do not need to use formal language or complete a specific form to raise a complaint. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use the Staff Grievance Procedure. Concerns about any serious wrongdoing may need to be dealt with under the Professional Curiosity, Whistleblowing and Managing Allegations Policy. Where a complaint involves more than one issue, CCYS will consider which policy or procedure is most appropriate and ensure that the person raising the concern is directed to the correct process.

Accessibility

CCYS will ensure that everyone can access and use the complaints procedure, regardless of their age, disability, communication needs or personal circumstances. CCYS will provide information in an alternative format where reasonably possible, allow a trusted person to support someone making a complaint, where appropriate and provide additional time where someone has accessibility or communication needs.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively and handled in accordance with applicable data protection legislation. Information is only shared where there is a legitimate reason to do so. Information may need to be shared with relevant statutory authorities where safeguarding, legal, or other reporting obligations apply.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Directors.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operation of the complaint's procedure, maintaining the complaints log and ensuring that complaints are investigated and responded to. All staff, volunteers and trustees are responsible for knowing how to respond when someone raises a complaint and passing complaints to the appropriate person promptly.

Operating the Policy

Written complaints may be sent to CCYS, Dormans, Crawley RH11 8HZ or by e-mail to complaints@ccys.org.uk

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to the Chair or in person to any of CCYS's staff or trustees at the above address or at any of our events or activities. The person receiving a complaint should not attempt to investigate a matter where they have a personal interest or involvement in the issue.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have. Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.

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

- Write down the facts of the complaint.
- Take the complainant's name, address, contact email and telephone number.
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to CCYS (e.g., volunteer, young person)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure.
- 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.
- Pass the complaint to the CEO or appropriate person within one working day, unless safeguarding or other urgent action is needed.
- Avoid promising a particular outcome before the complaint has been investigated.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see Appendix 1 Resolving Complaints

Appendix 1 - 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 24 hours.

On receiving the complaint, the CEO should record it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, they should 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 a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this Complaints Policy should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. 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 because of the complaint.

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 at Board level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the CHAIR.

The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The CHAIR may investigate the facts of the case themselves This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complainant Stage One.

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

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. 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 decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the CHAIR should not also have the CHAIR as the person leading a Stage Two review.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Appendix 2 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation.
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words.
- Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam”.
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry.
- Show an interest in what is being said.
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details.
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary.
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting what you have noted down.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you."
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise.

Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue.

Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.

- Don’t promise things you can’t deliver.
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told.

Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.