

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

The Trust welcomes your feedback in all forms. Your views and suggestions are an extremely useful part of ensuring that the current and future work of the Trust is meeting its community needs. We strongly believe that by dealing with Complaints in a thorough and professional manner, we will not only improve as a service, but we will also gain the trust of our customers, users and the wider public through exceptional customer service.

Our standards of service are designed to support the aims and objectives of the Trust in pursuit of its purpose; working to create a future free from inequality, supporting communities in Hackney and neighbouring boroughs to improve their health and wellbeing, develop social networks, and build skills and opportunities for meaningful employment.

We consult our clients and participants about our services and listen to what they have to say. We operate a simple and effective complaints procedure, designed to resolve problems, and prevent them reoccurring.

Complaints will be given a high priority and will receive a written response.

Purpose of this Complaints Policy

This document describes how you can make a Complaint and the procedure once a Complaint has been made. The Policy is aimed at anyone external to the Trust.

It is our aim to resolve Complaints quickly and fairly. This policy provides a clear explanation of the steps that will be taken in response to your Complaint and to ensure that everyone working for or with the Trust knows how to handle Complaints received.

What is a Complaint?

A Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service, actions or lack of action by the Trust, its staff or volunteers. It is a criticism that expects a reply and would like things to be changed. A non-exhaustive list of possible Complaints includes concerns:

- from a client about the quality of the service offered,
- from a client about the behaviour of someone working for the Trust,
- from a tenant about landlord actions,
- from a supplier about contract obligations,
- from someone we work with about the quality of programme delivery,
- from a member of the public about being impacted by the Trust's operations.

As with the daily operations of any organisation, there will from time to time be expressions of displeasure during communications and contact with those working for the Trust or

requests to be referred to management. In determining whether these instances are Complaints covered by this Policy, we will take the common-sense approach by asking ourselves whether the expression of dissatisfaction would reasonably require a specific or formal response. To support this approach, members of staff are trained to understand when they should record that a Complaint has been made. General queries, Freedom of Information requests and contractual or legal disputes will not be considered as Complaints.

What does this Complaints Policy cover?

This Policy covers any Complaint in relation to either the Trust's provision of services and goods or the behaviours of those acting on behalf of the Trust. This policy includes Complaints in relation to the services provided by 1) the Community Kitchen, 2) property issues where the Trust has responsibilities as landlord and 3) the services provided by the Wellbeing Team.

How to make a Complaint

Please ask to see or speak to a member of staff if there are any issues you wish to bring to our immediate attention. We welcome direct communication at the outset of an issue so that matters can be understood and hopefully resolved early, without escalation.

You can email, phone or write to us at:

Email: info@shoreditchtrust.org.uk
Phone: 0207 0338500 during the hours of 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.
Address: 12 Orsman Road, N1 5QJ

So that we can deal with any Complaint thoroughly, we ask that you provide details of your name and telephone number. Please let us know whether you are making this Complaint for yourself or on someone else's behalf and provide sufficient detail of the subject of the Complaint so that it can be recognised internally. We also invite you to set out any suggested improvements or changes.

How we handle your Complaint

Our Complaints Process contains two potential stages. It is our aim to always resolve Complaints to your satisfaction at Stage 1. If, however, you are not satisfied at the response from Stage 1 you may escalate your Complaint to Appeal Stage 2.

Each Complaint will be logged on to our internal Complaints Register. This will contain your details, the nature of your Complaint, any actions requested, the date the Complaint was received, the assigned Complaint handler and any actions taken. This register will enable us to monitor Complaints, to identify trends in Complaints and to report with an analysis of Complaints to the Trust's Board.

This Policy is NOT a Safeguarding or Whistleblowing policy. Please see these separate Policies on our website.

Stage 1

Initial Response - overseen by the Complaints Triage Manager (the 'CTM')

We will acknowledge your Complaint as soon as possible, in any event within 4 working days.

We will respond to your Complaint in writing within 15 working days from date of receipt after consulting as necessary with e.g. line managers, heads of departments, senior management or experts. Where we require more information from you, we will let you know. Where the timeline is likely to exceed 15 working days we will inform you of the reasons for a revised timeline.

As part of this Stage 1 process, all Complaints are referred to our internal CTM, which is made up of a trained individual from within the Trust: The Customer Services Manager. This manager oversees the response to each Complaint, ensuring that the individuals with the access to relevant information or the appropriate expertise are involved in the response. This post also reports at least annually to the Trust's Board on the nature of all Complaints received and recommends improvement actions as necessary.

The manager will ensure that you are provided with contact details of the Complaint Handler assigned to your Complaint, within 15 days of date of receipt.

Further correspondence or requests of information may be required as part of this Stage 1. We will inform you about ongoing timelines and provide written results of our final investigations and any actions taken as a result.

Stage 2

In the event that you are not satisfied with the resolution of your Complaint at Stage 1, you are entitled to request escalation to the Stage 2 Appeal process.

Stage 2 Complaints will be reported by the CTM to the Trust's Deputy Chief Executive officer and to the Trust's Board of Trustees who will appoint one of their number to oversee the Stage 2 Appeal response.

You will be informed of the contact details of the Appeal Complaint Handler.

As with Stage 1, further correspondence or requests of information may be required. We aim to resolve Stage 2 Appeals within one month from the date that Stage 2 is invoked. However, in some cases, particularly if your Complaint is of a complex nature, this may not be possible. We will inform you about ongoing timelines and the reasons for any extensions to the timeline. We will provide you with the results of our final investigations into your Complaint in writing and any actions taken as a result.

Our decision at this Stage is final, subject to any action you may wish to take as detailed on the Charity Commission website [Charity Commission Complaint Information](#).

At any stage in the complaints process, we will give due consideration to alternative ways of resolving any issues arising, for example, through face-to-face meetings or mediation.

Complaints relating to an individual

If your Complaint relates to a specific individual or group of individuals who are carrying out the work of the Trust, we will notify such individuals of the Complaint and they will be given an opportunity to respond. Any communication between you and the individuals concerned should only take place via the Complaints procedure via the appointed Complaint Handler at Stage 1 or the Appeal Complaint handler at Stage 2.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

All Complaints and relating information are treated with the utmost confidence. Such information will only be shared with those working for the Trust (or external advisors acting for the Trust) who need to know such information to be able to respond to your Complaint. All personal information that we may collect (including, but not limited to, your name and address) will be collected, used and held in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Questions and Further information

If you have any questions or require further information about any aspect of this Complaints Policy, please contact Fatima Aihoud, Head of Customers Services - fatima@shoreditchtrust.org.uk

Signed
Chair of the Board of Trustees

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Jeremy Gardner

Noted by the Shoreditch Trust Board of Trustees: 21 September 2021