



## ROYAL NATIONAL CHILDREN'S SPRINGBOARD FOUNDATION

### Complaints & Concerns Policy and Procedure

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## **Introduction**

A complaint or a concern is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, with a real or perceived problem. It may relate to our standards of service, action taken, or a lack of action, and may be about RNCSF, or a specific area of our work, or a particular member of staff, trustee or volunteer. Where it is unclear whether a communication is a complaint or a concern, it is generally best to err on the side of caution and treat it as a complaint.

Anyone with whom we work or engage may make a complaint or raise a concern. This includes pupils, prospective pupils, parents/guardians, schools, partners, other third-party organisations, supporters, and members of the public.

RNCSF is committed to maintaining the highest standards in all aspects of its work and strives to learn and improve from information gathered and experience gained from handling complaints and concerns.

## **Principles**

Our policy is to:

- provide a complaints and concerns procedure which is accessible, easy to use and fair;
- publicise our procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint or to raise a concern;
- treat complaints and concerns seriously and confidentially\*;
- treat everyone who makes a complaint or raises a concern with courtesy and respect;
- ensure that complaints and concerns are addressed in a timely manner;
- ensure that complaints and concerns are investigated fairly and thoroughly, which includes reviewing all relevant evidence and may include speaking to individuals who are the subject of the concern or complaint, as well as the person who has made the complaint or raised the concern and any third parties involved;
- reach decisions which are clear, evidence-based, proportionate, fair and appropriate;
- ensure that, wherever possible, complaints and concerns are resolved, relationships are repaired and, where appropriate, apologies are given; and
- learn from complaints and concerns so that we can improve our practices and procedures.

Everyone at RNCSF, including staff, trustees and volunteers, is aware of this Policy and Procedure and knows what to do if a complaint or concern is received.

Staff members who wish to make a complaint should follow the grievance procedures set out in the Staff Handbook, rather than those in this Policy and Procedure.

\*Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints and concerns are kept confidential unless, for legal reasons, we are required to disclose details to a third party such as a regulatory authority.



## **Procedure**

### *Contact us*

There are several ways you can contact us to make a complaint or raise a concern:

- In person: if you are dealing with a member of staff or a volunteer, please speak to them directly about your complaint or concern. It may be possible to resolve the issue immediately. If not, however, the staff member or volunteer will follow the procedure set out below.
- By telephone on 01932 868622.
- By email to [admin@royalspringboard.org.uk](mailto:admin@royalspringboard.org.uk)
- By writing to us at our Registered Office at Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation c/o McCarthy Denning, 70 Mark Lane, London, EC3R 7NQ.

### *Acknowledging your complaint or concern*

All complaints or concerns will be acknowledged within ten working days of receipt. If you have provided an email address, acknowledgement will be by email. Otherwise, we will telephone you, or use such contact means as you have provided. In all cases, we will confirm:

- that we have received your complaint or concern;
- the date on which we received it;
- the name of the member of staff who is dealing with it;
- the timeframe within which you will receive a substantive response; and
- that we are providing you with a copy of this Complaints and Concerns Policy and Procedure, for your reference.

### *Recording your complaint or concern*

We record details of all complaints and concerns received. This helps us to ensure that we handle complaints and concerns promptly and thoroughly and also that we capture all relevant information to help us to identify and make improvements to our practices and procedures. In all cases, we record the following information:

- the name and contact details of the person who has made the complaint or raised a concern;
- the date of receipt of the complaint or concern;
- a copy of any written documentation (including emails or other electronic communication) provided;
- what the complaint or concern is about and whether it appears to be a complaint or a concern;
- what action, if any, is requested by the person who has made the complaint or raised a concern;
- who is assigned to deal with the complaint or concern;
- the date by which a substantive response is due; and
- what action is taken to investigate the complaint or concern, the findings of such investigation and what action, if any, is taken as a result of such investigation.

### *Resolving your complaint or concern*

We are committed to resolving your complaint or concern through the following process, which is designed to be sensitive, as well as fair, thorough and transparent. We believe that any person is entitled to express their views on our work, and, where those views are negative, we will endeavour to resolve the issues raised, to learn from them and to improve our practices and procedures.

We treat anyone who makes a complaint or raises a concern with courtesy and respect. We will not tolerate abusive or discriminatory behaviour towards our staff or volunteers and may have to decline to investigate a complaint or concern further if such behaviour is evident.

#### *Level 1: Informal resolution*

In many cases, it will be possible to resolve a complaint or concern quickly and informally. The person dealing with the aspect of our work about which you have a complaint or a concern will pass your complaint or concern to their line manager who will ensure that your complaint or concern is:

- acknowledged within ten working days of receipt and as set out above;
- recorded, as set out above;
- investigated as appropriate in the circumstances; and
- resolved, by contacting you, usually within fourteen working days of acknowledging receipt of your complaint or concern, to summarise:
  - the investigation undertaken;
  - the findings of that investigation; and
  - the action taken, if any, as a result.

If you do not consider that the line manager has resolved your complaint or concern, you will be advised to proceed to Level 2: Formal resolution.

#### *Level 2: Formal resolution*

If your complaint or concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis, you should write to, or email for the attention of, the Chief Executive Officer (the **CEO**), who will treat the matter as a formal complaint. The CEO will:

- acknowledge your complaint within ten working days of receipt;
- record your complaint;
- review and assess the investigation and action taken at Level 1;
- conduct such further investigation as s/he considers necessary and appropriate in the circumstances (which may include appointing an impartial, independent investigator to review the evidence and meet relevant parties – e.g. parent, schools staff, charity's staff), and
- resolve your complaint, by writing to you, usually within twenty-one working days of acknowledging receipt of your Level 2 complaint, to summarise:
  - the review and assessment of the investigation and action taken at Level 1;
  - the further investigation undertaken, if any, at Level 2;
  - the findings of any such further investigation; and
  - the action taken, if any, as a result of such Level 2 investigation as is undertaken.

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved, you will be advised to proceed to Level3: Appeal.

## **Appeals process**

### *Level 3: Appeal*

If your complaint cannot be resolved at Level 2: Formal resolution, you should write to, or email for the attention of, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees (the **Chairman**), who will treat the matter as an appeal against the decision(s) reached at earlier stages.

The Chairman will:

- acknowledge your complaint within ten working days of receipt;
- record your complaint;
- convene an Appeal Panel comprising three Trustees or other suitable Advisors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint;
- ensure that the Appeal Panel conducts such further investigation as the Appeal Panel considers necessary and appropriate in order to review and assess whether the CEO has acted appropriately in the steps and action taken at Levels 1 and 2;
- the Appeal Panel's role is to consider whether a fair process has been followed and whether the CEO's decision was within the range of reasonable responses taking the charity's policies into account. The Appeal Panel's role is to review the case, not to re-hear it.
- write to you , usually within twenty eight working days of acknowledging receipt of your Level 3 complaint, to confirm the final decision about the complaint and reason for the decision
  - the Appeal Panel may either uphold the CEO's decision
  - or remit the matter to the CEO for further consideration

The decision of the Appeal Panel is final. If you are not satisfied, you may pursue your complaint externally, as set out below.

### *After Level 3: Appeal*

There are no further internal options after Level 3: Appeal. You may, however, contact our regulator, the Charity Commission for England and Wales at [www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity](http://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity)

If your complaint relates to fundraising, you may contact the Fundraising Regulator at [www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints](http://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints)

If your complaint relates to data protection, you may contact the Information Commissioner's Office at [www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/](http://www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/)

## **Complaints against, or concerns about, the CEO or the Chairman of the Board of Trustees**

- Where a complaint is made against, or a concern raised about, the Chief Executive Officer, this should be put in writing (including email) and addressed to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.
- Where a complaint is made against, or a concern raised about, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, this should be put in writing (including email) and addressed to the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees.



- Where a complaint is made against, or a concern raised about, a Trustee, the Chairman (or the Vice-Chairman, as appropriate) shall ensure that the Trustee in question is not a member of any Appeal Panel.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

- We record complaints and concerns centrally to enable effective monitoring and evaluation. Records are retained in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.
- As part of our drive for continuous improvement, we review regularly the record of complaints and concerns received to identify any trends or wider learning. We consider what lessons can be learned and how we can improve our services and the experience of those who engage with us.
- We implement our learning in order to improve our practices and procedures and monitor the implementation of lessons learned to ensure that opportunities for improvement are not missed.
- The CEO reports quarterly to the Board of Trustees on complaints and concerns received, and on the implementation and application of lessons learned from complaints and concerns previously reported. Where a complaint or concern is live at the time of a quarterly report, the CEO's report will contain only minimal details in order not to prejudice Trustees who may be required to serve on an Appeal Panel.

### **Other related policies**

- Safeguarding Policy (where a complaint or concern relates to safeguarding, we will deal with it in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy, as well as pursuant to this Policy and Procedure)
- Staff Handbook
- Data Protection Policy

### **Policy review date**

Date of approval and adoption: March 2023

Date of next review: June 2025