



Whitelands College Guild

Registered Charity 293628

www.whitelandscollegeguild.org



COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES

Adopted at Trustees' Meeting 17 March 2022

Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide an understanding of what a complaint is, how it can be made and the process for dealing with it. Whitelands College Guild views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone 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 Whitelands College Guild knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps Whitelands College Guild to improve what it does

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the administration and operation (including actions taken or lack of action) of Whitelands College Guild.

Where complaints may come from

Complaints may come from any individual, volunteer or organisation who has a legitimate interest in Whitelands College Guild, including the general public, if something is perceived to be improper. A complaint can be received verbally (including by telephone), by email or in writing.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, informing only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection and safeguarding requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the trustees of Whitelands College Guild. A simple and clear version of these definitions and procedures should be publicised prominently on the Guild website and provide a link to this document.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the trustees and updated as required.

Procedures

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Complaints may be made to any trustee of Whitelands College Guild where their contact details are made available in Guild communications, on the Guild website or in the entry for the Guild on the Charity Commission website. Complaints may also be sent to the Guild's administration email account, admin@whitelandscollegeguild.org.

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 verbally 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 and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Whitelands College Guild, e.g. member, office holder, donor, volunteer, recipient. Etc.
- 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

Where it is unclear whether a communication is a concern or a complaint, it is generally best to err on the side of caution and treat it as a complaint.

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 General Secretary of Whitelands College Guild within one week.

On receiving the complaint, the General Secretary records it in the Complaints Logbook. If it has not already been resolved, they 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 five working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this procedure should be attached. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. 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 by the full Executive Committee.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to all the trustees. The request for a full trustee review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The trustees may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within one month. 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 because of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the trustees decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External Stage

In the unlikely event that the complainant is still not satisfied they, or the Trustees, may refer the matter to the Charity Commission or to another regulatory body such as the Fundraising Regulator.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Trustees may vary this procedure if there is a good reason for them doing so. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about an individual trustee should not also have that trustee involved as a person leading a Stage Two review.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

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

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