

Complaints Policy & Procedures

1. Aims of Policy

Sycamore Trust U.K. aims to deal with any complaint promptly, fully, fairly, and sensitively within the defined time limits where possible. Providing effective and appropriate responses and encourage resolution of concerns and complaints by informal means wherever possible.

2. Legislation

Sycamore Trust U.K. is committed to compliance with all national UK laws in respect of personal data, and to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals whose information the organisation collects in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the UK Laws that implement it - Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations – UK GDPR, Privacy and Electronic Communication Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018 (**Data Protection Legislation**).

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, consultants, and contractors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Anti-bullying and Cyber-bullying Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Managing Allegations Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- The Staff handbook

4. Statement

Sycamore Trust U.K. provide services to the public, local statutory bodies, and voluntary organisations. As a service provider, we operate a complaints procedure to ensure we are alerted to problems, can offer redress for any substantiated complaint and revise practises in response to feedback received.

The following notice will be displayed:

Sycamore Trust U.K. aim to provide services of an acceptable standard to all our users. If you feel our services fail to do this, we want to know about it. This will enable us to not only deal with the specific problem but also to prevent it from happening again.

5. Introduction

This policy sets out the procedures we will follow when we receive a complaint from users of the services, an organisation or member of the public. It does not address complaints by staff or volunteers (dealt with through Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures within The Staff Handbook) and not job applicants (Safer Recruitment Policy).

This procedure is meant to provide a means to resolve a dispute between the charity and any complainant. It requires staff and Trustees at every stage to resolve the complaint. Complaints are likely to be in one or more of the following areas:

- Dissatisfaction with our service, such as inadequate work, problems with casework, unacceptable delay, or failure to deliver a service etc.
- Disputes between user and the charity regarding policy, procedures, or activities
- Discourtesy or unhelpfulness on the part of the staff

6. The Procedure

If someone wishes to register a complaint, the following procedure should be adopted.

Where the complaint is against the CEO, the same procedure will be followed, but with the Chair of the Trustees substituting for the CEO's role at all stages.

6.1. Preliminary Stage - The complaint should be received either via completion of a complaint form or by request to make a verbal complaint.

6.2. Stage 1 - The complainant should be invited to speak to the member of staff dealing with complaints and/or their line manager to discuss the complaint with them. This can be done in person or by phone, whichever is appropriate. The staff member/Line Manager will endeavour to resolve the issue.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, or where it is not possible to use Stage 1 for example it is not convenient for them to phone or visit the office, then refer to Stage 2 below.

Stage 1 should be completed within **5 working days** of the complaint.

6.3. Stage 2 - The complainant should be asked to put their complaint in writing to the CEO, marked Private and Confidential, providing as much detail about the complaint as possible.

If the complainant is not able to put their complaint in writing, the complainant will be offered an interview with the CEO or his/her nominee. The role of the CEO or his/her nominee at this meeting will be confined to putting the complaint in writing, obtaining the complainants approval for the content of this, and ask the complainant to sign to indicate they agree with the contents. The complainant may choose to work with a third party at this stage and throughout the process – the Charity should provide a list of potential advocates if the complainant does not have a resource they can turn to.

The CEO will investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it.

The CEO may delegate any aspect of the investigation to a nominee.

If the complaint involves a member(s) of staff, the CEO should offer the member of staff the opportunity to put forward their account, either by written statement or by presentation to the panel.

The CEO will ensure that all written complaints will receive a response in writing within **10 working days** of the letter/complaint notes being received. This letter will summarise what investigations have been carried out and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter. A copy of this letter should be attached to the complaints form.

If a response by letter is unsuitable, the complainant will be offered an interview with the CEO to provide his response verbally. This meeting should be held within **10 working days** as before. A written record of this interview will be kept a signed by the complainant.

If the complainant is not satisfied at this stage, they should ask for the matter to be dealt with under Stage 3 of the complaint's procedure.

6.4. Stage 3 - Where the matter is not resolved by stage 2, the CEO should immediately refer the complaint to the Trustees, sending copies of all written correspondence to the complaints panel members. The Complaints panel will comprise of the Chair of Trustees and a designated Complaints Officer and one other Trustee Committee member.

The Complaints Officer will be responsible for convening the Panel – in the absence of the Complaints Officer the Vice Chair will become the convener.

The complainant will be informed immediately by the Complaints Officer or Chair that this is being done and the panel will also be contacting the staff member(s) against whom the complaint is made.

The panel will review the decision at stage 3 and may seek further clarification from the parties involved.

The Complaints Panel will notify the complainant of its decision and reasons within **15 working days** of hearing the complaint. The Panel's decision will be final. The Complaints officer is responsible for ensuring records of the meeting are kept and the complaint monitoring form is completed.

The Complaints Officer will be responsible for reporting the panels' findings to the next meeting of the Trustees Committee.

6.5. Stage 4 - The complainant will be notified that if they remain unhappy with the decision, the complaint can be passed on for arbitration.

6.6. Arbitration will be confined to the following:

- Establishing that the complaints procedure has been followed
- Ensuring that the complaint has been dealt with fairly

7. Recording and Monitoring Complaints

All complaints will be recorded and kept on file, including those which were resolved without being put into writing. The complaints monitoring form shall be used to do this. All complaints shall be treated with regard to the Confidentiality Policy.

The CEO will make a report once a year to the Trustee Committee summarising the nature of the complaints received and how they were resolved.

8. Publicising the Procedure

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that posters are displayed in the waiting area welcoming complaints from users. The posters should clearly explain the procedure for making a complaint.

9. Ensuring the effectiveness of the Procedure

All Trustee Committee Members will receive a copy of the complaint's procedure.

Existing and new workers will be introduced to the complaint's procedure via induction and training. The procedure will be reviewed annually, and amendments should be proposed and agreed by the Trustee Committee.

Approval of Policy

Signed: Jo Baty (Chair) Date: 8 November 2023

For and on behalf of the Trustees of Sycamore Trust U.K.

Signed: [Signature] (CEO) Date: 8 November 2023

This policy will be reviewed in **October 2024** or if legislation should change whichever is sooner.

Complaints Form

Name :

Address:

Telephone Number:

Email:

Please tell us the details of your complaint (You may use additional sheets): -

Please tell us what you feel should or should not have happened: -

Please tell us what you would like us to do now: -

May we contact you at the listed:-

Address YES / NO

Telephone No. YES / NO

Email YES / NO

Signed _____ **Dated** _____

OFFICE USE ONLY

Reference Number: _____

Actioned by _____ **date** _____

Resolution: **By Phone** **In Person**
 In writing **By Question**
 Panel decision

CEO's signature _____ **date** _____

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