

COMPLAINTS POLICY 2016

1. Introduction

- a. Essex Community Foundation (ECF) welcomes feedback on the services it provides in relation to the management of funds. Comments are regarded as a useful tool to enable us to review and improve the service we provide.
- b. This policy lays out the formal complaints procedures pursued by ECF.
- c. As signatories of agreements with donors, ECF adheres to the policy and to make it available to interested parties.
- d. Complaints received outside the policy and unsupported by written evidence cannot be effectively pursued.
- e. This policy is based on the complaints policy of UK Community Foundations, the umbrella organisation of community foundations in the UK. This is the standard used across the Network for dealing with complaints and other feedback that may arise:
 - i. in relation to the fund advisory panels.
 - ii. from a service recipient.
 - iii. from a donor in relation to the administration of a funded programme.
- f. ECF has a number of responsibilities when dealing with complaints. Specifically it must:
 - i. ensure complaints are dealt with swiftly and appropriately
 - ii. ensure that relevant stakeholders, local panel members and potential grant recipients are aware of the complaints policy and procedure and have access to its contents
 - iii. keep a register of all complaints received and the action taken to deal with them.
- g. ECF has a responsibility to respond to any complaints that may be brought to its attention. This may include:
 - i. accusations of fraud
 - ii. accusations of mismanagement
 - iii. major deviations from agreed procedures
 - iv. negligence
 - v. any other issue likely to have a negative impact on the fund holder

2. What is a complaint?

- a. A complaint arises when a member, a fundholder, a service partner (for example a Named Fund panel or an individual member of a panel) or grant recipient is dissatisfied with the service they have received from ECF.
- b. The complaints procedure is not a grant appeals process (see the Grantmaking Policy) whereby a refusal to fund or reduction in the grant offered is due to the available budget. Appeals will only be allowed in the cases outlined in the Grant Policy appeal process.
- c. For employees and volunteers, a grievance procedure allows them to raise concerns in connection with work-related matters.
- d. A disciplinary procedure can be used by ECF when an employee or volunteer is in breach of terms or conditions, and it may also be used as the outcome of an investigation of a complaint.

3. Complaints procedure

- a. Details should be sent in writing to the Chief Executive of ECF unless the complaint concerns the Chief Executive in which case the complaint should be sent to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- b. The letter should state:
 - i. what the complaint is about
 - ii. the member(s) of staff, or governing committee involved
 - iii. when the event in question occurred and if it is still happening
 - iv. what action/remedy would be expected as an outcome

4. What will happen when a complaint is received?

- a. An acknowledgement will be made within five working days (from the date of receipt) and will include the name of the person dealing with the complaint and the date when a fuller response can be expected, which will be no later than 28 working days.
- b. The person responsible will investigate all aspects of the complaint, allowing others involved, including any person who is the subject of the complaint, to make their contribution and possibly reverting to the complainant for supporting information or evidence.
- c. The subject of the complaint, if it is an individual, will be informed as soon as it is considered appropriate according to the nature of the complaint.
- d. The person responsible may also seek an independent review by a third party.

- e. The relevant Committee of Trustees and the full Board of Trustees, as appropriate, will be passed information of the complaint.
- f. A full report will be sent to the complainant by the CEO or Chair of Trustees, as appropriate, together with details of any action taken or recommendations for further action, within the agreed timescale. If it is not possible to provide a full report within this time the complainant will be advised and an interim report given, including details of action still to be taken.
- g. If the complainant remains dissatisfied there is the opportunity to take the complaint to the Charity Commission (CC). As a risk based regulator, the CC focus priorities and resources where it is judged that their efforts can be most effective for charities and the people who use them. In doing this the CC consider the nature of the complaint being made and the risks associated with what is being alleged and its impact upon the charity. More information can be accessed on the Charity Commission website.

5. What happens when a complaint has been dealt with?

- i. Essex Community Foundation will include the complaint in the complaints register.
- ii. The complaints register will be reviewed annually by the Chief Executive and the Chairman of the Board. Where appropriate, recommendations will be made for changes in policy or practice

This policy will be reviewed by the Governance and Compliance Committee every three years, before being shared with Trustees and Staff for their information. The Chief Executive will review the policy annually and recommend amendments if prompted by legislative changes or if believed to be in the best interests of the organisation.