

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, service users, public, 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.

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).

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, either spoken or written. It can be made by a group or an individual.

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.

5. The Procedure

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

5.1. Stage 1 (Informal) - Speak to the individual(s) concerned or their line manager to try to informally resolve the complaint. This can be done in person or by phone, whichever is appropriate. The staff member/Line Manager will endeavour to resolve the issue.

5.2. Stage 2 (Formally registering a complaint) – If you are still unsatisfied with the outcome from stage one you should then use stage two. (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).

- Put your complaint in writing to the CEO, marked Private and Confidential, providing as much detail about the complaint as possible (see appendix 1 – for copy of complaints form) and send to Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Sycamore Trust UK, 27-29 Woodward Road, Dagenham, Essex, RM9 4SJ.
- 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 contain the following information: -
 - Name of person investigating the complaint and how they can be contacted.
 - The date the investigation will start.
 - What support you can receive during the process of the complaint.

You will receive a full response in writing to your complaint within **21 working days** from the start of the investigation. The response should include: -

- Details of the investigation.
- A decision about whether the complaint was upheld or not.
- The reason for the decision.
- The redress, if appropriate, which will be offered to you e.g. an apology, directing you to other sources for advice or support.
- Any other action that may have been taken in response to the complaint.
- If it is not possible to provide a full answer within the timescale the letter will outline the reasons why and give a date by which a full answer may be expected.

5.3. Stage 3 (Appeal) - Where the matter is not resolved by stage 2 then it will be escalated to stage 3, you should outline the reasons for your dissatisfaction by letter or email within **7 working days** of the response to the CEO (or Chair of the Trustees if it is about the CEO).

An appeals panel (normally three members, including a trustee) will be organised to consider your appeal. The CEO (or chair of trustees, if it is about the CEO) will be responsible for ensuring the panel has the appropriate representatives. Panel membership will be restricted to people who have no previous involvement in the complaint.

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

- Read through the necessary papers.
- Speak to relevant individuals involved with the complaint
- Make a final decision.

The Complaints Panel will notify the complainant of its decision and reasons within **28 working days** of hearing the complaint. To confirm:

- The final decision about the complaint.
- The reason for the decision.
- The redress, if appropriate, which will be offered to you e.g. an apology, additional help, or directing you to other sources for advice or support.
- Any action that may be taken in response to 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.

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

5.5. Arbitration will be confined to the following:

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

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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:  (Chair) Date: 17 April 2025

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

Signed:  (CEO) Date: 17 April 2025

This policy will be reviewed in **October 2026** 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:- <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 40%;">Address</td> <td>YES / NO</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Telephone No.</td> <td>YES / NO</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Email</td> <td>YES / NO</td> </tr> </table>	Address	YES / NO	Telephone No.	YES / NO	Email	YES / NO
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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