



## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **Statement of Intent**

HACS aims to deliver the highest quality service in all aspects of our work. However, we recognise that it is important to have a procedure whereby parents/carers, individuals using our services, the public, professionals and others with whom we work may make a formal complaint if they feel that our work falls short of a reasonable standard. Our procedure is set out below.

The charity endeavours that this formal procedure will be used as a “last resort”. Every effort will be made to resolve differences by informal discussion between the parties directly involved.

The use of HACS complaints procedure will in no way diminish the statutory rights of a complainant.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants’ desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

### **Definitions**

A concern is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The Charity will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”. This policy outlines the procedure for complaints.

## Complaints Procedure

1. Any person wishing to make a complaint should contact the Chief Executive in writing, either via email or letter. If the complaint is regarding the Chief Executive, or a conflict of interest arises which would inhibit an impartial investigation by the Chief Executive; the complaint should be sent in the first instance to the Chair of Trustees, who will delegate the duties listed below of the Chief Executive to an appropriate Trustee.
2. The Chief Executive will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and will provide an indicative date for a written response, and a summary of how the matter will be handled. The Chief Executive will be responsible for ensuring that your complaint is investigated appropriately. They may meet with you to clarify details of your complaint and the resolution that is being sought. The Chief Executive will investigate the complaint further and make every effort to resolve the issue.
3. Dependent upon the nature of the issues raised, the matter will either continue to be dealt with through the Charity’s Complaints Policy and procedure, or by more appropriate procedures such as the Whistle-Blowing Policy, Disciplinary Policy or Safeguarding Strategy. If this happens, complainants will be informed of how the issue will be dealt with, but may not be advised of the full outcome of these proceedings.
4. The Trustees will be informed of the existence of the complainant but will not be provided with full details at this stage.
5. The Chief Executive will as soon as possible take all practicable steps to ensure that the complaint and its background are fully investigated. Such an investigation will involve careful consideration of all relevant evidence and circumstances and may include:
  - Meetings, telephone conversations and/or correspondence with the complainant
  - Meetings, telephone conversations and/or correspondence with any person complained against
  - Review of any paper-based or electronic evidence
6. We aim to give you a response to your complaint within 10 working days after acknowledging receipt of the Complaint. If this is not possible, we will write to you to let you know why there is a delay and the estimated time it will take to provide a full response. The Chief Executive will need to allow a reasonable amount of time to the complainant or any person complained against to make submissions. When this time has elapsed the Chief Executive will proceed to make a considered decision on the complaint in the light of the evidence available.
7. The Charity will treat all complaints and responses to complaints on a strictly confidential basis and will urge all parties to do likewise.
8. Having carefully and objectively considered all relevant evidence and circumstances; the Chief Executive will provide a written decision on the complaint to the complainant, any person complained against and to the committee.

## **Remedies for redress**

The purpose of redress is to remedy the injustice or hardship suffered and where possible to return a complainant to the position they would have been before the situation went wrong. Types of redress include:

- an apology
- providing the service that should have been received at first
- taking action or making a decision that should have been done before
- reconsidering an incorrect decision
- improving procedures so that similar problems do not occur again

## **Additional Sources of Support**

If a complaint is with regards to Children and Young People's Services and the complainant feels unable to talk to HACS about their concerns, or they are unsatisfied with the outcome of an investigation into their complaint, Ofsted can be contacted directly on 0300 123 4666.

## **Unreasonable or Unreasonably Persistent complaints**

If we consider that a complainant is unreasonable or unreasonably persistent, we will refer the matter to the Trustees, who will consider whether further investigation of the complaint will be carried out.