

Woodbrooke Learning and Research Complaints Policy

Woodbrooke Learning and Research (WL&R) considers feedback from participants, staff, volunteers and partners to be crucial to the development and quality of the learning, research and worship that we offer. We seek to gather feedback about how participants experience our sessions, courses and worship, what they feel is beneficial, and what might be further developed.

We understand that, at times, people may wish to complain about WL&R and the work and service that we undertake. WL&R aims to handle all complaints in a fair and timely fashion. We welcome feedback and complaints where necessary to help us improve our services and programmes. Individuals may make a complaint whatever their relationship to WL&R.

This policy covers:

1. Complaints about our sessions, courses and other learning and research activities that cannot be resolved informally.
2. Complaints about the conduct of our staff and volunteers.
3. Complaints about other services provided by WL&R (e.g worship, learning resources, etc)

The satisfaction of those who use our services is of great importance to WL&R, and it is hoped that the majority of complaints can be dealt with on an informal basis. Where a complaint needs to become formal WL&R will use the procedure outlined below to deal with complaints in a straightforward and transparent manner. WL&R requests that complainants provide full details of their complaint so that the issues raised can be fully investigated.

Informal Stage

It is hoped that the majority of complaints can be handled informally. This can help resolve an issue quickly and directly. Complainants may initiate the informal process in the following ways:

- By speaking directly to the tutor or elder from the session, course or worship, or to a member of the Learning & Research Administration Team.
- By contacting learning@woodbrooke.org.uk describing the issue or concern. A member of the administration team will acknowledge the email within 2 working days and pass the email to a relevant member of staff who will respond within 5 working days.

A log of informal complaints will be kept by the Learning Administration Manager and reviewed by the Head of Learning and Research quarterly. This will be kept in a location with restricted access and only accessible by those who need to log or review complaints.

Formal Stage

A complainant may choose this route either:

- If they have tried to resolve the complaint informally and do not feel this has been resolved satisfactorily **or**
- if they consider that the informal route is not appropriate.

In all cases a complaints form (available on the website or by request) must be completed and sent to learning@woodbrooke.org.uk with the subject given as **Confidential Complaint**. The complaint form should be submitted within 10 days of the concern occurring unless there is a reason why this cannot happen. Please ensure that you provide your full name, contact details including a daytime telephone number along with:

- a full description of your complaint (including the subject matter and dates and times if known)
- any names of the people you have dealt with so far
- copies of any materials, emails or letters to do with the complaint.

Our Privacy Policy, which can be seen on our website, explains how we use and protect your information. Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us, and, if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences, please inform us that you do not wish us to divulge your identity. While we are prepared to investigate issues which are reported to us anonymously we will always try to confirm an allegation by means of a separate investigation before taking up the matter with those to whom the complaint/allegation relates.

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 working days, letting you know who is investigating your complaint. The Head of Learning and Research will be responsible for ensuring the investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with the procedures in this policy, and will either investigate the matter or allocate a relevant member of staff to lead the investigation. At all times we will ensure that WL&R personnel assigned to the investigation have the appropriate level of training and competence and that they have had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter – other than initial contact acknowledging the complaint and explaining our procedures to the complainant. If the Head of Learning and Research has had previous involvement in the complaint matter they will not be responsible for allocating a member of staff to carry out the investigation or for overseeing and managing the investigation, and another senior member of the team will do this. We aim to investigate the complaint within 15 working days. If your complaint is more complex, or involves people who are not available at the time, we may need to extend this. We may contact you within this period to seek further information or clarification (in some instances we may recommend a meeting). At the end of the investigation we will write/email to inform you of our decision.

If any part of your complaint is upheld we will, of course, respond accordingly and give due consideration to how we can improve our services and arrangements. Examples of the kind of arrangements we may implement as a result of an upheld complaint may include:

- Undertaking appropriate staff or volunteer induction or training as required to prevent the complaint matter from reoccurring
- Reviewing our procedures to assess the impact on the services we provide
- In extreme circumstances, internal disciplinary procedures may be exercised where the performance or behaviour of our staff is deemed inappropriate.

In situations where a complaint has been successful, or where an investigation indicates a failure in our quality assurance processes, we will give due consideration to the outcome and will take appropriate actions such as:

- identifying any other person or organisation who has been affected by the failure
- correcting, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigating as far as possible the effect of the failure
- reviewing and amending our arrangements, where appropriate, to reduce the likelihood that the failure will reoccur in the future

Appeals

An appeal against the outcome of a complaint investigation may be made by contacting learning@woodbrooke.org.uk marked **Confidential Appeal** within 10 days of receiving the response to your complaint.

The Administration Manager will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 3 working days. The appeal will then be passed to the Director of Woodbrooke who will conduct an initial review. We aim to complete the initial review within 20 working days. Please note that in some cases the review process may take longer, for example, if interviews are required. In such instances, we will contact everyone concerned to inform them of the likely revised timescale.

Initial assessment of the Appeal

The first stage will be for the Director of Woodbrooke to undertake an initial assessment of the situation to ensure the appeal application is complete and to ascertain if the issue can be resolved before it goes to a review by a designated trustee. Following the initial review the Director of Woodbrooke will write to you with details of a decision to either:

1. amend our original decision in light of the new rationale/evidence being put forward and which has now been reviewed or
2. confirm we stand by our original decision and the rationale for this decision

We will request that you confirm, within 15 days, whether you now accept this decision or if you wish to proceed to our trustee appeals review process which will be carried out by a designated trustee.

Trustee Review of the Appeal

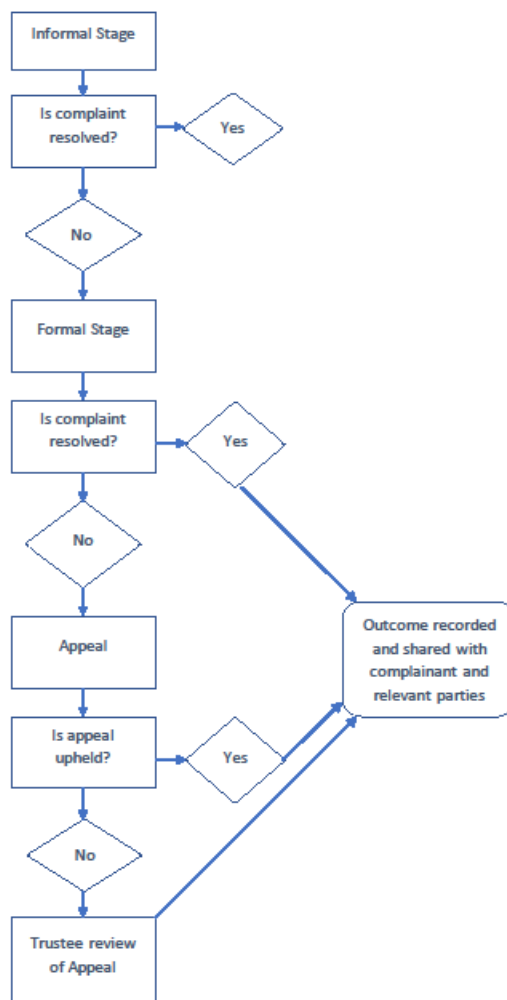
If you wish to proceed to the final stage in our appeals process and ask for a trustee review, please send your request to learning@woodbrooke.org.uk marked **Confidential Trustee Appeal**. A designated trustee will carry out a review. The purpose of the review is not to revisit any decision but to investigate failings in the complaint and appeal process. All previous stages of the complaint and

appeal process must be concluded before an application for trustee review is made. The designated trustee will be someone with the relevant competence to make a decision in relation to the appeal and will not have a personal interest in the decision being appealed. The designated trustee will review all the evidence from the above stages and determine if procedures have been applied fairly, appropriately and consistently in line with our policy. The trustee review process may involve:

- a discussion with the complainant and with any staff or volunteers involved
- a request for further information from the complainant and/or staff or volunteers

The designated trustee’s decision is final in relation to the appeal process. The Head of Learning and Research will write or email to inform you of the outcome of the review within 30 working days of the request for a trustee review.

Flowchart of Complaints and Appeals Process



Records of Complaints and Appeals

WL&R will keep a confidential record of all complaints and appeals for 7 years. The Head of Learning and Research will present a summary report of all complaints and appeals to the Trustees’ Learning & Research Committee at each meeting.

Policy Last Reviewed March 2022

Next revision date March 2023

Reviewed by: Head of Learning and Research

Contact us: If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact the Head of Learning and Research learning@woodbrooke.org.uk