



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Principles for responding to complaints

- Take every complaint seriously
- Listen carefully
- Ask questions
- Record what has been said date, time, complaint and response given
- Investigate further if necessary
- Communicate clear timescales
- Respond with a solution and act quickly to avoid escalation.
- Follow up

Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure is to help anyone who raises problems and concerns about TCF, its Trustees, staff or volunteers.

It is expected that most complaints will be dealt with quickly at stages 1 & 2 and resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Complaints Officer

The Board of Trustees (Board) is responsible for appointing a Complaints Officer (CO) with appropriate skills, who may or may not be a member of the Board.

The CO should be in office for a fixed period of time so as to be immediately available to act either on an informal basis as a mediator or to establish and carry out a formal complaint investigation.

STAGE 1

The complainant should discuss the concern with the member of TCF involved who should listen, record what is said and report to the National Office within 2 days.

STAGE 2

The National Office will collect the details and pass them to the TCF Complaints Officer (CO).

The role of the CO, at this stage, is to mediate between the parties with a view to reaching a solution

The CO will contact the complainant immediately to discuss the facts. It may be necessary for the CO to investigate further and contact the other parties involved.

Complaints will be treated in confidence.

If, after investigation, discussion and mediation by the CO, a satisfactory outcome is achieved, the CO will notify all parties in writing and make a written report to the CEO.

The matter will then be considered closed.

Formal Procedure for Dealing with Complaints

If the matter is unresolved, the complainant should send their complaint in writing to the TCF CEO.

The CEO will discuss the matter with the CO in order to try and resolve the complaint, and may consult for advice. If the complaint is still unresolved, it will be passed, if the complainant wishes, to the Complaints Panel.

Complaints Panel

1. The Complaints Panel will be established by the Chair of Trustees.
2. The Panel shall consist of the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Trustees and two other Trustees. The Chair or Vice-Chair will chair the Panel. When nominating the Panel, the Trustees shall have regard to the EDI Policy.
3. The Panel shall meet within fifteen working days of a written complaint being received by the Chair of Trustees, or as soon as practicable thereafter.
4. A letter or email shall be sent to the complainant ten working days before the date of the Panel meeting by recorded delivery post stating the date, time and place of the Panel meeting, and the complainant's right to be accompanied by a friend. Any documents relevant to the complaint will be enclosed with the letter or attached to the email, together with a copy of this procedure. If the complainant wishes to refer to any additional documents in their possession, copies of these should be sent by post or email to "The Chair of the Complaints Panel" five working days before the date of the Panel meeting so that sufficient copies can be available at the meeting.
5. The Panel Chair shall notify the CEO in writing of the date, time and place of the Panel meeting, together with details of the complaint, ten working days before the date of the panel meeting.

6. The CEO shall prepare a report for the Panel explaining the response to the complaint, including any recommendations they may wish to make for action to resolve the complaint. A copy of this report shall be sent to the complainant five working days before the date of the Panel.

An independent clerk should record the meeting.

How the Panel meeting will be conducted

The aim of a Panel meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve, wherever possible, reconciliation between TCF and the complainant. It is important that everyone involved in a Panel meeting considers carefully both what is being said and any relevant documents. If previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses are introduced at a Panel meeting, the Chair of the Panel may adjourn the meeting to give people time to consider their situation. The CEO will be expected to attend a Panel meeting, and may be accompanied by a representative.

The Panel meeting will be as informal as possible, and will normally be run as follows:

1. The complainant (or friend) will explain their complaint and may do this in a written statement if they wish.
2. The Panel and the CEO may ask the complainant questions about the complaint and why it is being made.
3. The Panel and the complainant (or friend) may ask the CEO questions about their response to the complaint.
4. Where there are disputes as to facts, the complainant, the CEO or the Panel may ask witnesses to attend the meeting. These witnesses may be asked questions by anyone involved in the meeting.
5. The complainant (or friend) may make a final statement.
6. The CEO may make a final statement.
7. The Chair of the Panel will explain that the Panel will now consider the complaint and decide what to do about it, and that their decision will be sent to the complainant and the CEO as soon as possible.
8. Everyone involved, except the Panel, will leave the meeting.
9. The Panel will then consider the complaint and decide what action is to be taken and/or to be recommended to a meeting of Trustees.
10. The Panel's decision, and their reasons, will be sent to the complainant and the CEO in writing within five working days of the meeting.

11. The Trustees will be informed at their next meeting that a complaint has been received and resolved.

12. The sending of the written decision to the complainant will conclude the complaints procedure.

Appeal

If the complainant or the CEO is not satisfied with the decision of the Complaints Panel, they will be referred to an Appeal Panel constituted under this procedure but with different Trustees.