

Bendrigg complaints policy

Policy owner	Finance & HR Manager
Approved / Reviewed on	17/01/23
Next review	Jan 2027
Related Policies	Ethical Fundraising Policy

1. Our Aim

Bendrigg Trust is committed to providing a quality service and working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our services is by listening and responding to the view of our visitors, and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly
- keep matters low-key
- reach a mutually satisfactory conclusion to matters as quickly as possible.

Therefore, we will ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially
- we respond in the right way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly.

This policy ensures we provide guidelines for dealing with complaints about our services, facilities, staff and volunteers. For any fundraising complaints see our ethical Fundraising policy.

2. Definitions

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction, however, it is expressed. This would include complaints expressed face to face, via a phone call, in writing, via email or any other method. All staff should have sufficient knowledge to be able to identify an “expression of dissatisfaction” even when the word “complain” or “complaint” is not used.

3. Complaints

The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

4. Responsibilities

Bendrigg Trust's responsibility will be to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing;
- respond within 24 hours (during the working week)
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint; and
- take action where appropriate.

A complainant's responsibility is to:

- bring their complaint, in writing or verbally to Bendrigg Trust's attention as soon as is reasonably possible;
- raise concerns promptly and directly with a member of staff;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow Bendrigg Trust a reasonable time to deal with the matter, and
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond Bendrigg Trust's control.

5. Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and Bendrigg Trust maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own facts). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

6. Complaints Procedure

Written records must be made by Bendrigg Trust at each stage of the procedure.

Stage 1

In the first instance, staff member(s) must inform a Manager, in order for them to establish the seriousness of the complaint. An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. If concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Stage 2

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the complainant should be advised that a formal complaint may be made and the following procedure should be explained to them. It may be appropriate for a different member of staff, preferably a member of the Management Team, to make this explanation.

- I. A formal complaint can be made either verbally or in writing. If verbally, a statement should be taken by a member of the Management Team, staff member or a supervisor.
- II. In all cases, the complaint must be passed on to a Manager. In the event of a complaint about a Manager, the complaint should be passed to the Centre Director. If the complaint is about the Centre Director this must be passed on to the Chair of Trustees.
- III. A complaint must be acknowledged by a Manager, within 24 hours (during the working week).
- IV. A Manager will investigate the complaint and record any actions taken. Any conclusions reached should be discussed with those involved.
- V. Within 14 days, a written response on behalf of the Trust, which is approved by the Centre Director, will be sent to the complainant. If this is not possible then a letter must be sent explaining why.

Stage 3

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the initial investigation, they can ask for the matter to be referred to the Chair of Trustees or if the Chair of Trustees has already been involved, to the Bendrigg Trust Appeals Committee.