

# Complaints Policy

## Scope:

This procedure applies to concerns raised by stakeholders in the Trust's activities – including applicants, trustees, donors and others involved in the Trust's work.

## Introduction:

The Trust is committed to providing a mechanism for dealing with complaints fairly and in a timely manner. Complaints are expected to be rare and should be dealt with as quickly as possible. All complaints (other than Serious Complaints which have been submitted to the Charity Commission) should be sent in the first instance to the Clerk.

The Trust is also committed to treat complainants with dignity and respect throughout but has a duty of care towards its trustees and the Clerk. Abusive or threatening behaviour from complainants will not be tolerated, and may, with the approval of the Chair, result in the complainant being blocked from contacting the Trust by email. Where necessary, the Chair may refer abusive or threatening behaviour to the police.

## 1. Complaints and Appeals from Applicants

- 1.1. Complaints and appeals from applicants will only be considered if made *either* on the grounds of an administrative error by the Trust in processing their application, *or* if there is new information which could not reasonably have been provided before but could have changed the decision on eligibility or scoring of the application. Non-receipt of an application (confirmed through checking our email server) does not count as an administrative error by the Trust. An applicant has 25 working days from being notified of their ineligibility or unsuccessful application to lodge a complaint. Complaints after this time will not be considered, except in exceptional circumstances, as determined by the Chair.
- 1.2. The Trust has clearly defined criteria for accepting applications, and these are available to all potential candidates via the website and in the *Notes for Applicants* produced for each annual grant round. The Clerk assesses applications against these criteria, discussing with the Chair if in doubt, and where they are ineligible they will, after the grant round has been completed, be sent a general email by the Clerk explaining that the application was not successful. This email explains we are unable to enter into discussion about individual applications.
- 1.3. If nonetheless an applicant challenges the eligibility or scoring assessment, the Clerk reviews the evaluation based on such additional information as is provided and seeks advice from the Chair. Where there are no grounds for revising the decision, a second email is sent confirming the decision. In this case, the Trust will not enter into any further correspondence with the applicant. If however there are grounds for a revised decision, the application is referred to the Chair for final review and the outcome communicated to the applicant.
- 1.4. Of those applications which meet the eligibility criteria, the first 300 received are reviewed by the trustees. Funding decisions are made based on review of each application by three trustees working independently of each other. Unsuccessful applicants are informed by email. Decisions made by the trustees are final and, unless the Trustees consider that there are exceptional circumstances, the Trust will not review funding decisions for unsuccessful

applicants.

- 1.5. All complaints received from applicants are reviewed annually by the trustees at a Board Meeting, and if necessary the Clerk and Chair will make recommendations for amendments to the guidelines and the funding criteria. Any changes to the guidelines will be reflected in the '*Guidelines for Assessing Applications*' which is made available to trustees.

## **2. Other Complaints**

- 2.1. Complaints other than those covered above should be raised in the first instance with the Clerk, who will refer the matter to a trustee (normally the Chair or Vice-Chair unless they are perceived to be conflicted). They in turn will review the complaint, respond to the complainant, and report the matter to the next Meeting of Trustees.
- 2.2. Any individual who has serious concerns about the Trust, for example if they believe it is:
  - not doing what it claims to do
  - losing lots of money
  - harming people
  - being used for personal profit or gain
  - involved in illegal activity

may decide to report these concerns to the Charity Commission. An online form is available at: <https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/raising-concerns/> .

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