

GCUK: Complaints Policy

Policy

When a person or organisation indicates dissatisfaction with the service received, it is the policy of GCUK to take all reasonable steps to resolve the situation.

Objectives

GIST Cancer UK (GCUK) aims to continuously improve the service it provides and welcomes constructive criticism about its activities and their delivery. Complaints are an opportunity to learn and improve, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint. The aims of this policy are to:

- To provide a fair and transparent complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use.
- To make sure complaints are investigated in a timely manner.
- To enable complaints to be resolved and relationships repaired wherever possible.
- To gather information which helps GCUK to improve.

Definitions

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of GCUK and its services including concerns regarding equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Complaints may come from anyone who has engaged with GCUK or its services.

The **informal process** seeks to resolve issues at the local level between the complainant and those involved.

The **formal process** seeks to resolve issues where local resolution has not been possible or where the issues raised are deemed to be of a serious nature.

Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees.

Responsibility for investigating and responding to formal complaints normally lies with the Secretary. S/he may delegate this responsibility to others. Where the complaint relates to Secretary then the Chair will identify an independent Board member (other than him/herself) to undertake the investigation.

The Secretary is responsible for ensuring that the Complaints Policy is publicised via the website.

The Secretary is responsible for informing the Board of the nature and outcomes of any complaint and its investigation.

Procedure

All complaints will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Anonymity

Anonymous complaints will be recorded and investigated. However, anonymous complaints can be malicious. Everyone has a right to complain and we will hold anyone accountable but, equally, individuals have a right to be protected from unsubstantiated and, potentially, malicious allegations. Consequently, anyone wishing to complain is strongly encouraged to provide his or her contact details. This will also allow us to seek clarification about issues and to advise him or her of the outcomes.

Informal Process

Complaints may be received in different ways and may be received initially by anyone acting on behalf of GCUK. The person receiving the complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint and, where appropriate, ask the complainant to provide a written account so that it is recorded in the complainant's own words.
- Seek to resolve the complaint if they are in a position to do so.
- Pass on details of the complaint and its resolution or lack of resolution to the Secretary who will undertake an investigation where necessary.

- If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.
- Where necessary, explain what will happen next and how long the process is likely to take.
- Ensure that the complainant is kept aware of progress with resolving the issue including actions taken, and of the formal complaints procedure.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see Appendix 1

Formal Process

If a complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved through the informal process or where the Secretary deems it to be a serious matter, then the formal process will be followed.

The Secretary or his/her nominee will investigate the facts of the case. They should:

- Talk to the complainant and others involved.
- Involve appropriate experts where necessary e.g. Members of the Medical Advisory Board.
- If the complaint relates to a specific person, s/he must be informed and given an opportunity to respond.
- Keep those involved in any informal stage informed of what is happening.
- Ensure complainants receive a definitive reply within four weeks of submission of the complaint. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

- Provide a formal response to all parties on completion of the investigation including details of any actions that will be taken and the reasons.
- Report the nature of the issue and the outcome of the investigation to the Board of Trustees.

The decision taken at this stage is final unless the Board decides it is appropriate to re-open the investigation in which case the Chair of the Board will determine the process in line with the principles set out in this policy.

Wider Action

Irrespective of the outcome of any complaint, GCUK will consider if there is any requirement in respect of wider action and/or statutory reporting to the [Charity Commission](#), [H&SW Executive](#), other regulator, or the [Police](#).

Consideration will be given to whether any changes should be made to policies, procedures, training etc to see if anything might reasonably be done to prevent a similar issue arising in future.

Potential Compensation Claims

If a complaint may potentially result in a claim for compensation, such as damage or loss to property, or personal issue, GCUK's insurers must be notified.

Reference points

Guidance produced by the Charity Commission and by the Charity Excellence Framework has been used to compile and review this policy to ensure it meets sectoral expectations.

Version Control - Approval and Review

Policy owner: Secretary

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
1.0	Board	Jan 21	Previous version approved	Annually
2.0	Board	Jan 24	Reviewed and extensively revised to simplify and match internal and external developments.	Annually

Appendix 1

Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

1. Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
2. Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
3. Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
4. Show an interest in what is being said
5. Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
6. Ask for clarification wherever necessary
7. Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
8. Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation
eg "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
9. If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise
10. Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
11. Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve
12. Don't promise things you can't deliver
13. Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
14. Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
15. Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal