

The Reader Complaints Policy

Policy Title: Complaints Policy

Date Adopted: September 2010

Date Reviewed: February 2014, November 2016, January 2020, February 2023

Next Review Date: January 2026

Accountable Person: Head of People

Policy Statement:

The Reader will treat complaints seriously and ensure that complaints, concerns and issues raised by volunteers, beneficiaries, partners and customers are properly investigated in an unbiased, non-judgmental, transparent, timely and appropriate manner.

The outcome of any investigation, along with any resulting actions will be explained to the complainant by The Reader.

The key issues taken into consideration when formulating this policy are that a complainant needs to:

- Know how to complain;
- Feel confident that their complaint will be dealt with seriously.
- Understand that their concerns will be investigated, and they will be informed of the findings of that investigation.
- Trust that The Reader will learn from complaints, feedback and praise and apply those lessons whilst also learning from and sharing best practice.

Aims and Objectives:

- To make it as easy as possible for a person to raise a complaint
- To ensure that the person making the complaint feels confident that their complaint is listened to and acted upon promptly and fairly.
- To ensure we learn from complaints and use them to make improvements.
- To provide an effective and straightforward complaints procedure
- To respond in the right way e.g. politely, timely and with regular updates

To Whom the Policy Applies:

Volunteers, group members, customers, stakeholders, service users, partners.

Definition

A complaint or concern is an expression of dissatisfaction about an act, omission or decision of The Reader, either verbal or written, and whether justified or not, which requires a response.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Complaints that require a response must be reported to Head of People to be logged. People Team will monitor the progress of the complaint.

Regular monitoring and evaluation will be conducted by the People Team to identify any trends in complaints. The policy will be evaluated against:

- The number of formal complaints received.
- The number of formal complaints unresolved.
- Compliance by managers to the procedure and adherence to its requirements.

People Team will escalate any trends or concerns identified to Directors Group. In addition the volume of complaints alongside any relevant concerns will be reported to the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis.

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1. Introduction

The Reader will treat complaints seriously and ensure that complaints, concerns and issues raised by volunteers, beneficiaries, partners and customers are properly investigated in an unbiased, non-judgmental, transparent, timely and appropriate manner. The outcome of any investigation, along with any resulting actions will be explained to the complainant by the investigating organisation.

2. Informal Complaint

Misunderstandings can often be sorted out on an informal basis. It might be that the person making the complaint does it verbally to a member of staff and the problem can be resolved there and then. However, if the person complaining, or the person hearing the informal complaint is not satisfied or feels that the complaint needs to be looked at on a more formal basis then a formal complaint should be made.

3. Making a Formal Complaint

If you wish to make a formal complaint about The Reader, you should direct your concerns to our Head of People, who will record it and appoint an appropriate person to deal with it. A copy of The Reader Group's Complaint Policy and Procedure will also be forwarded to the person making the complaint.

Formal complaints can be made in the following ways:

- In writing – marking the letter 'private and confidential' and addressing it to the Head of People, The Reader Group, Calderstones Mansion House, Liverpool L18 3JB
- By telephoning (0151) 729 2200 between the hours of 9 am – 5 pm Monday- Friday and asking for the Head of People.
- By e-mail to info@thereader.org.uk, heading the e-mail 'Complaint- For the attention of the Head of People.

In your letter, phone call or e-mail you should provide the full details and circumstances of your complaint and the resolution you are seeking.

Complaints should be made within four weeks of the issue arising.

Head of People will consider the subject of the complaint and allocate the complaint to an appropriate staff member for investigation and response.

If the complaint relates to a Director, the Managing Director will investigate, or if not appropriate will be raised with the Chair of Trustees.

If the complaint relates to the Managing Director, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be informed and allocate the complaint to a Trustee for any necessary investigation.

4. Timescales:

All complaints will be acknowledged either in writing, by email or by telephone within 3 working days of receipt. Our aim is to resolve the complaint within this initial 3 working day period, however if this is not possible we will contact you to inform you of the person appointed to deal with your complaint and to give you a timescale in which you will receive a full response.

It is expected that the majority of complaints will receive a full response and explanation within 10 working days of the receipt of the initial complaint. In particularly complex matters it may take a little longer to fully investigate. Where this occurs, we will contact you to explain this and give you an update on where the complaint investigation is up to and when you can expect a final response.

Our aim is to provide a final response letter to your complaint within eight weeks of receipt of the original complaint.

The response will include:

- An explanation of how the complaint has been considered
- An apology if appropriate
- An explanation based on facts
- Whether the complaint is upheld in full or in part
- The conclusion reached from the complaint and any remedial actions considered appropriate by The Reader.
- Confirmation that The Reader is satisfied any action has been or will be actioned
- Where possible, we will respond about any lessons learnt.

If you are not satisfied with our final response then you have the option of escalating the complaint stating the reason why you are dissatisfied with the outcome. Contact details for the relevant person for escalation will be included in the response to the complaint. The person appointed will review the situation and respond accordingly.

5. Confidentiality:

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and The Reader 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 merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

6. Restrictions:

The Reader will attempt to resolve all concerns relating to its activities. However, there are certain types of complaints that we cannot deal with, including the following:

- Matters that have been (or are being) dealt with by a court or tribunal

- A grievance against The Reader arising from the execution of its obligations under law or binding agreement

Calderstones Park:

Complaints relating to any of the following in relation to The Reader's site at Calderstones Park should be made directly to Liverpool City Council:

- The park grounds
- Lighting in the park
- Dogs in the park
- Park Users
- Children's play areas
- Pathways
- Park entrances and gates
- Car parks
- Liverpool Street Scene Services
- Events and activities taking place in the park delivered by organisations not connected to The Reader

Record Keeping

It is important to retain records of complaints received and action taken. Records will be stored securely in accordance with our Data Protection Policy for a period of 10 years.