



## Complaints Policy & Procedure

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about Herefordshire Growing Point's services, staff, trustees or volunteers. Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has an interest in our charity, such as its beneficiaries, donors and members, or the wider community. Herefordshire Growing Point (HGP) views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as being the chance to put things right for the person or organisation making the complaint.

Our policy is to:

- Provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use
- Publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- Ensure that everyone at Herefordshire Growing Point knows what to do if a complaint is received
- Investigate complaints fairly and promptly
- Take appropriate action to resolve the complaint, and repair relationships

***This policy does not cover complaints or grievances made by staff or tutors, who should use Herefordshire Growing Point's Grievance procedures.***

All information concerning a complaint will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know, and following relevant data protection requirements.

HGP recognises that often, concerns raised will be informal, and we aim to deal with these promptly and fairly. In many cases, the person responsible for the issue is best placed to resolve the concern, and they should do so as quickly as possible, if appropriate. If concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed. The complaints procedure will be suspended if at any time during the investigation of a complaint matters arise that warrant investigation in other ways (which might include criminal investigation), or if the complainant is actively seeking legal redress.

### **Responsibility**

The trustees of Herefordshire Growing Point have overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation.

### **How to make a complaint**

If you have a complaint, please contact us as soon as possible.

Complaints can be made by speaking to any of our staff, volunteers or trustees at the Headway House garden, or our events and activities. If you prefer not to make the complaint in person, you can write, email or phone:

Herefordshire Growing Point  
c/o Headway House  
Trenchard Avenue  
Credenhill  
Hereford HR4 7DX

Email: [hgrowingpoint@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hgrowingpoint@yahoo.co.uk)

Tel: 07816 257983  
01432 805705

The following information should be included for both verbal and written complaints:

- An outline of the nature of the complaint giving clear details where possible, which will help us in the investigation.
- The name and contact details of the complainant (essential, as we will not investigate anonymous complaints).

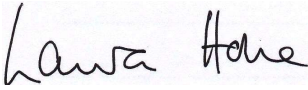
Please note that we endeavour at all times to treat people with respect and we expect the same standards of behaviour from others.

Acknowledgement of a complaint will be made in writing within 7 days of receipt, giving an indication of the proposed action, and when the person complaining can expect a response. We will assign investigation of the complaint to the most appropriate person, who will communicate with you until the matter has been resolved. When the investigation is complete, we will write to you where possible within 4 weeks to explain the outcome, conclusions, and any action to be taken. If the investigation has not been fully completed by then, a written progress report will be sent. If you feel that the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved, you have the option of asking Herefordshire Growing Point's Trustees ('the Executive Committee') for a review.

**External stage**

A complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in may be found on its website at: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

*This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.*

Signed: .....  .....(Chairman)

Date Adopted: .....10 October 2021 .....

Author	Position	Date of next review
Shelagh Wynn	Trustee	Sept 2023

## **APPENDIX 1: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Herefordshire Growing Point uses a two-stage procedure.

### **Stage One**

When a verbal or written complaint is received, the Course Coordinator and the nominated trustee\* must be informed within 48 hours. They will delegate a suitable person to handle investigation of the complaint and take appropriate action. They will also inform the Chairman that a complaint has been received, and outline the planned course of action.

If the complaint concerns either the Course Coordinator or the nominated trustee, the Chairman will then handle the investigation.

The complaint must be recorded in the Complaints log.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond, and offered support if appropriate.

The person handling the complaint should acknowledge the complaint within 7 days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of the Complaints policy should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply with four weeks about the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusion of the investigation, and any action taken as a result 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.

\* the trustee named as the author of the Complaints policy, unless otherwise decided

### **Stage Two**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request review by Herefordshire Growing Point's trustees (Executive Committee).

The request for trustee review will be acknowledged within one week of receiving it, stating who will deal with the review and when the complainant can expect a reply. The trustees will delegate a suitable person to investigate the facts of the case, including reviewing any paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply with four weeks about the further action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusion of the investigation, and any action taken as a result. If this is not possible because for example, the review has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

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Once all procedures relating to a complaint are complete, the records will be kept by Herefordshire Growing Point (securely and in accordance with data protection requirements). Trustees at a subsequent Executive Committee meeting will review anonymised reports of complaints and their resolution.

## **APPENDIX 2 – Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints**

The following may be helpful if someone approaches you wishing to make a complaint:

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details. Make notes of the conversation at the time, or soon afterwards, and explain why the notes are being made.
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- 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 e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of HGP, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Tell the person about the Complaints procedure