

Complaints Policy

Key Statement

Southampton City Mission (CIO) (hereafter SCM) views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at SCM knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of SCM.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from Basics Bank service users, referral agents, Marketplace members, schools, volunteers, donors, members of the local community and others who have a legitimate interest in SCM and the services it offers.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use SCM's Grievance procedure.

Confidentiality

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

Responsibility

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

Ratified by the trustees at a meeting on 17th January 2022

Signed (Chairperson/Secretary).....

Review due January 2025

Complaints Procedure

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints

Written complaints should be sent to Southampton City Mission (CIO) at Unit 5 Second Avenue Business Park, Southampton, SO15 0LP or by e-mail at office@southamptoncitymission.co.uk

Verbal complaints should be made by phone to 023 8055 0435 or in person to any of SCM's staff, Supervisors or Trustees at any location where we are providing services or holding an event.

1) Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.

The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Take the complainant's name, telephone number and address/email address
- Write down the facts of the complaint e.g. what happened, when, where, who was involved
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to SCM (for example service user, volunteer)
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

For further internal guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see Appendix 1.

Complaints should be passed directly to the relevant Project or Line Manager, and not discussed amongst other staff or volunteers.

2) Resolving Complaints

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the SCM General Manager within one week.

On receiving the complaint, the SCM General Manager records it in the Complaints Log. If it has not already been resolved, they may investigate the matter themselves or delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. This person should, wherever possible, be independent of the situation which has given rise to a complaint.

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

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within one week. The acknowledgement can be verbal, in writing or by email and should confirm who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be forwarded.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. 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 reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to The Chairman of Trustees at Southampton City Mission (CIO), Unit 5 Second Avenue Business Park, Southampton, SO15 0LP.

The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within one week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chairman of Trustees together with one other Trustee, may investigate the facts of the case themselves, or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This will involve reviewing the 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 within four weeks. 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.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chairman should not also have the Chairman as the person leading a Stage Two review.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.