

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

**Implementation Date: 13/09/2023**

**Last reviewed: 09/06/2026**

1. Next Chapter Scotland 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.
2. 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 staff and Board members at Next Chapter Scotland know 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 COMPLAINT

3. A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Next Chapter Scotland.

### WHERE COMPLAINTS COME FROM

4. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.
5. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use Next Chapter Scotland Discipline and Grievance policies.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

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

### PUBLICISED CONTACT DETAILS FOR COMPLAINTS

7. Written complaints may be sent by e-mail to the Chair of the Board at **[chair@nextchapterscotland.org.uk](mailto:chair@nextchapterscotland.org.uk)**

### RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

8. Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.
9. Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded in writing.
10. The person who receives a phone or in-person complaint should:
  - Write down the facts of the complaint.
  - Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number.
  - Note down the relationship of the complainant to Next Chapter Scotland (for example: customer, client, guest, member).
  - Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure.
  - Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long the next step will take.
  - 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.
  - The person receiving the complaint must inform their line manager (staff / volunteer) or the Chair of the Board (board member) at the earliest opportunity.

## RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

11. The Procedure for resolving complaints is as follows:

**Stage 1** 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. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond and resolve. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Chair of the Board or their delegate for these matters within one week. On receiving the complaint, the Chair of the Board or their delegate should record it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, they should delegate an appropriate staff or Board member to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

**Stage 2** Complaints not resolved within the week as per Stage 1 should be acknowledged by the person delegated to handle the complaint within a week from the point of delegation. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached. 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 justified 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.

- Stage 3 If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 2, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. At this stage, the Chair of the Board will take it to the Board members for review. The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply. The Chair of the Board may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage 1. 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 1 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. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

## COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN OR VULNERABLE ADULTS

12. The procedure above should be followed, with the additional steps:
- The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) on the Board must be notified and involved at all stages of the process.
  - A Stage 3 process will automatically be required for all complaints of this nature.
  - The person whom the complaint refers to must be removed from all situations relevant to the complaint for the duration of the process.
  - Consideration must be given as to whether external agencies need to be notified of the event, in the event that the complaint is upheld.
  - Paperwork regarding complaints of this nature, whether upheld or not, must be held securely by the DSO for 5 years after the complaint.
  - Such paperwork should be referred to in the event of future complaints, in order to check for trends.

## VARIATION OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

13. 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 Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage 2 review.

## LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

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

## MONITORING

15. It is the responsibility of the General Manager / Chair of the Board to ensure that all staff, including new or temporary staff, are familiar with this policy and to monitor that it is being implemented.