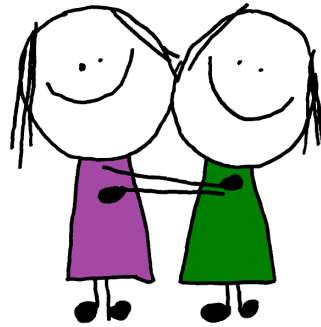


Friends – Play for Disabled Children



Friends – Play for Disabled Children
Email: info@friendsplay.org.uk
Website: www.friendsplay.org.uk
Registered Charity Number: 1167995

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Status: Approved

Approval date: 2 October 2026

Version: 1.0

Next review: October 2027

Supersedes: 2025 Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

Friends – Play for Disabled Children (“Friends”) aims to provide a welcoming, safe and well-run service for disabled children, young people, adults and their families.

We recognise that sometimes people may be unhappy with something we have done, or believe that something could have been handled differently.

We welcome complaints as an opportunity to:

- understand concerns;
- put things right where reasonably possible;
- learn from problems;
- improve our activities and procedures; and
- maintain trust with the families and communities we support.

2. What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action, decision, service, activity or other aspect of Friends.

A complaint may relate to, for example:

- the organisation of an event or activity;
- communication;
- the behaviour of a trustee or volunteer;
- the application of a Friends policy or rule;
- bookings, tickets or transport;
- accessibility arrangements;
- how a concern has been handled; or
- another aspect of the charity's activities.

A request for information, general feedback or a simple enquiry will not normally be treated as a formal complaint unless the person raising it wishes it to be.

3. Who can make a complaint?

Complaints may be made by:

- Friends members;
- parents or carers;

- people who attend Friends activities;
- volunteers;
- representatives of venues or organisations Friends works with; or
- members of the public affected by Friends' activities.

Where appropriate, someone may make a complaint on behalf of another person with their permission.

4. How to make a complaint

Where possible, concerns should first be raised informally with a trustee or volunteer, as many issues can be resolved quickly.

Formal complaints should normally be sent by email to:

info@friendsplay.org.uk

A complaint may also be raised verbally with a trustee at a Friends event or activity. Where a complaint is made verbally, Friends will make an appropriate written record of it.

It is helpful if the complaint explains:

- what happened;
- when it happened;
- who was involved, where relevant;
- why the person is unhappy;
- any steps already taken to resolve the issue; and
- what outcome they are seeking.

Friends will not require more personal information than is reasonably necessary to deal with the complaint.

5. Safeguarding and serious concerns

A complaint involving a safeguarding concern will be dealt with under the **Safeguarding Policy** rather than solely through the ordinary complaints procedure.

Where necessary, Friends may also contact appropriate safeguarding services, the police or another relevant authority.

A complaint involving an immediate risk of serious harm should not wait for the normal complaints process.

6. Confidentiality and data protection

Complaints will be handled sensitively and information will only be shared with people who reasonably need it in order to consider or respond to the complaint.

Complaint records will be handled in accordance with Friends' Data Protection Policy.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information must be shared because of:

- a safeguarding concern;
- a serious risk of harm;
- suspected criminal activity;
- a legal obligation; or
- another legitimate need to protect an individual or the charity.

7. Fairness

Friends will aim to deal with complaints fairly and impartially.

Where a complaint concerns a specific trustee, volunteer or other person, that person should normally be told about the substance of the complaint and given a reasonable opportunity to respond.

A person who is the subject of the complaint should not make the final decision on that complaint where another trustee can reasonably do so.

Where there is a conflict of interest, Friends will allocate the complaint to another trustee wherever possible.

8. Stage One – Initial consideration

When a formal complaint is received, Friends will normally:

1. record the complaint;
2. acknowledge receipt within **7 days**;
3. identify an appropriate trustee to consider it;
4. gather any information reasonably required;
5. give relevant people an opportunity to respond where appropriate; and
6. provide a written response.

Friends will aim to provide a full response within **4 weeks**.

Where more time is reasonably required, the complainant will be told:

- that the matter is still being considered;
- the reason for the delay where appropriate; and
- when a further response is expected.

The response should explain, as appropriate:

- what was considered;
- the conclusion reached;
- any action already taken;
- any further action Friends proposes to take; and
- how to request a Stage Two review if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

9. Stage Two – Trustee review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage One, they may ask for the complaint to be reviewed.

A Stage Two review will be carried out by a trustee or trustees who were not primarily responsible for the Stage One decision wherever reasonably possible.

The reviewer may:

- consider the original complaint;
- review the Stage One response;
- review relevant records or correspondence;
- speak to people involved; and
- obtain additional information where reasonably necessary.

Friends will acknowledge a Stage Two request within **7 days** and aim to provide a final response within **4 weeks**.

If this is not possible, Friends will provide an update and a revised expected response date.

The Stage Two response will normally represent the end of Friends' internal complaints process.

10. Possible outcomes

Depending on the circumstances, a complaint may result in:

- an explanation;

- an apology;
- correction of inaccurate information;
- changes to a booking or administrative process;
- review of a policy or procedure;
- additional guidance or training;
- action under the Code of Conduct;
- safeguarding action;
- changes to how future activities are organised; or
- no further action where the complaint is not upheld.

Friends will not promise a particular outcome before the complaint has been properly considered.

11. Unreasonable, abusive or repeated contact

Friends understands that people may be upset or frustrated when making a complaint.

We will not treat a complaint as unreasonable simply because a person is persistent, distressed or disagrees with our decision.

However, Friends may place reasonable limits on communication where behaviour becomes seriously abusive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing or unreasonably repetitive and is preventing the charity from dealing with the matter or carrying out its work.

Any such restriction should be proportionate and should not prevent genuine safeguarding or serious concerns from being raised.

12. Complaints relating to a trustee or the whole trustee body

Where a complaint relates to a trustee, another trustee should handle the complaint wherever reasonably possible.

Where a complaint concerns several trustees or the trustee body collectively, the remaining trustees will decide how the matter can be considered fairly.

Where necessary, the trustees may seek appropriate independent advice or external support.

13. External organisations

Friends' internal complaints procedure should normally be used first for ordinary complaints about the charity.

The **Charity Commission for England and Wales is not a general complaints or appeals service for individual disagreements with charities**. It may consider serious regulatory concerns, for example serious harm to beneficiaries or others, significant loss or misuse of charity funds or assets, serious illegality, or other serious misconduct or mismanagement. [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Other organisations may be more appropriate depending on the nature of the concern. For example:

- safeguarding concerns may need to be reported to the appropriate safeguarding authority or police;
- suspected criminal activity should be reported to the police;
- personal-data concerns may be raised with the Information Commissioner's Office;
- fundraising complaints may fall within the remit of the Fundraising Regulator.

Nothing in this policy prevents a person from contacting an appropriate regulator, statutory body or emergency service where the matter falls within that organisation's remit.

14. Complaints records and learning

Friends will maintain an appropriate record of formal complaints and their outcomes.

Complaint information may be reviewed by trustees to identify:

- recurring issues;
- opportunities to improve activities;
- training needs;
- policy changes; and
- wider risks.

Where information is used for monitoring or reporting, Friends will avoid unnecessary identification of individuals.

15. Review and approval

This policy will be reviewed:

- at least annually;
- after a significant complaint where lessons should be reflected in the policy;
- where Friends' structure or procedures change; or

- where relevant guidance or legal requirements change.

Approved by: Friends – Play for Disabled Children Trustees

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