

# **Complaints Policy - Leicestershire Fieldworkers**

Leicestershire Fieldworkers views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person, local group 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 Trustees of Leicestershire Fieldworkers 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 a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the operation and governance of Leicestershire Fieldworkers.

## **Where Complaints Come From**

Complaints may come from members of Leicestershire Fieldworkers, groups affiliated to Leicestershire Fieldworkers, organisations who have dealt with Leicestershire Fieldworkers (including suppliers), members of the public who wish to raise a matter concerning the operation and governance of Leicestershire Fieldworkers.

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

## **Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, involving 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 Trustees of Leicestershire Fieldworkers.

## **Review**

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on:.....[date]

Last reviewed:.....[date]

# Complaints Procedure of Leicestershire Fieldworkers

## Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to Leicestershire Fieldworkers, to the current Chairman of the Fieldworkers, or to any member of the Committee. Complaints can also be sent by email to [info@leicsfieldworkers.co.uk](mailto:info@leicsfieldworkers.co.uk)

Verbal complaints may be made in person to any Leicestershire Fieldworkers Trustee or Committee Member at any events or activities. Names of the Trustees/Committee members will be updated on the website after each AGM.

## 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 an in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint or ask the complainant to do this at the time, or, 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.
- Take the complainant's name, address, telephone number and email address
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Leicestershire Fieldworkers (for example: public, member, supplier)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure and make arrangements to forward this to them by post or by email
- Tell the complainant that they will be told by post or email what will happen next and how long it will take

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see **Appendix 1**

## 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 Chairperson of Leicestershire Fieldworkers within one week of receipt, or, if this is not possible, to another officer of the Committee, including the Vice-Chairman, Treasurer or Secretary.

On receiving the complaint, the Secretary of Leicestershire Fieldworkers will record any complaint received in a complaints log book. If it has not already been resolved, the Chairperson with the Secretary will investigate it and to take appropriate action. The Chairperson and/or the Secretary can delegate investigation to another member of the Trustees. If the complaint is about a Trustee then that person may not investigate the complaint.

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

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within 10 days. 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 may 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 Two**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed by an external organisation. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chairman of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society (LAHS).

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

The LAHS Chairperson may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitable 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 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.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the LAHS Chairperson decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution. Further advice will then be sought from Voluntary Action Leicester.

## **External Assistance**

The complainant can also complain to the Charity Commission. The commission's involvement in looking at complaints is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to a charity's beneficiaries, assets, services or reputation.

Information about the kind of complaints in which the Charity Commission can be involved is available on their website at: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

## **Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Fieldworkers Trustees 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 the review.

## **Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

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

## **Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints**

- 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
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- 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 your organisation, 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
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal