

Complaints & Appeals Policy

December 2024

Version	Date	Author	Approved By	Approved Date
V2.0	Nov 2024	Joe Bailey	Board of Trustees	18 Dec 2024

Whilst we make every effort to meet peoples' expectations, circumstances may arise where an individual has a concern and wishes to bring this to our attention. We will take all reasonable steps to resolve the situation, in everyone's best interests.

For very serious concerns, such as an individual's safety being placed at immediate risk, take such action as is appropriate. For example, by calling the emergency services.

1. Informal Complaints

Anyone who has a concern should initially raise this with a member of our team at the time, as this enables us to respond and deal with an issue quickly. This may be an event leader, trustee, coordinator or member of staff.

We will seek to resolve matters and meet any reasonable expectations the individual may have, ideally to his or her satisfaction. If unable to, make a note of:

- The complainant's name and contact details, unless they are unwilling to provide these.
- The nature of their concern and anything that they wished to be done about it.
- The circumstances surrounding the complaint, including when, where, any action that was taken and the details of others who were present/involved.

Advise the complainant that their concern will be passed to the office or Trustees as appropriate.

2. Formal Complaints

Where an individual wishes to make a formal complaint, they should do so through the OutdoorLads Complaints [Webform](#) (also found on [OutdoorLads.com/Governance](https://www.outdoorlads.com/Governance)). To help resolve the complaint as quickly and effectively as possible, the individual making the complaint should do so as soon as possible and should provide as much information as possible.

The receipt will aim to be acknowledged, if possible, within 7 working days and include the details of the individual responsible for reviewing and investigating the complaint. A copy of this policy should be sent to the complainant for their information.

The complaint will then be investigated. If necessary, specialist advice will be sought. Where clarification or further information is felt to be necessary, the investigator will contact the complainant or other relevant party to request this.

Formal complaints are handled by members of the OutdoorLads staff, except in cases where:

- The complaint is about a staff member or when there is limited staff availability to handle the complaint promptly, in which case the complaint will be handled by a non-executive Trustee (not the Chair, Vice Chair or Treasurer).
- The complaint is about a Trustee, or a Trustee was involved in the informal complaint and the unsuccessful resolution of which led to the Formal complaint, in which case the Formal complaint will be handled by the Treasurer or Vice-Chair.

A response will be sent within 14 days. If this is not possible, a holding reply will be sent after 14 days advising when we estimate the investigation will be completed. The complaint response will explain our findings and what action we will be taking/have taken, subject to the constraints of the Data Protection Act, which will almost certainly not allow us to disclose sensitive personal information.

3. Appeals

A complainant may appeal the decision by writing to the Office at support@outdoorlads.com. Appeals must be submitted within 28 days of our response to the complaint. An acknowledgement receipt will be sent within 7 days and include the details of the Trustee responsible for reviewing the appeal.

An appeal cannot be a restatement of the original formal complaint or be purely due to dissatisfaction with the outcome. An appeal will only be considered if either:

- The complainant can show that the investigation or response did not follow the procedure outlined above.
- New and relevant evidence or information becomes available that was not previously considered.

Appeals will be investigated by a Trustee (usually the Chair, Vice Chair or Treasurer) that has not been involved in the Informal, Formal or subsequent investigation.

A decision will be made within 28 days and the outcome will be final.

4. Wider Action

Irrespective of the outcome of any complaint, we will consider if there is any requirement in respect of wider action and/or statutory reporting to the Charity Commission, Health & Safety Executive, other regulator, or the Police.

Consideration will also to be given to whether any changes should be made to policies, procedures, training etc. to see if anything might reasonably be done to prevent a similar issue arising in future.

5. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be recorded and any facts available looked into. However, in doing so we will be mindful that anonymous complaints can sometimes be malicious. Everyone involved in our work, even incidentally, has a right to complain and we will hold anyone accountable but, equally, individuals have a right to be protected from unsubstantiated and, potentially, malicious allegations. As such anonymous complaints that are unsubstantiated, lack substance and are unspecific may not be upheld, depending on the concern raised. We strongly advise that the complainant in this instance provide evidence of the issue being raised.

Consequently, anyone wishing to complain is strongly encouraged to provide the information requested above and their contact details. This will also allow us to advise them of the outcome and facilitate corroboration.

6. Potential Compensation Claims

If a complaint may potentially result in a claim for compensation, such as damage or loss to property, or personal issue, our insurers are to be notified.

7. Potential Compensation Claims

The complaint will be treated as confidential and any communication on this issue, including responding to the complainant, will be subject to compliance with the Data Protection Act.