
COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

1. Definitions and Interpretation

1. In this Complaints Handling Procedure the following expressions have the following meanings:

“Appeal”	means a request from a Customer to escalate a Complaint to Level Two following an unsatisfactory outcome at Level One;
“Appeal Handler”	means the Trustee of Widecombe Community Hall Charity who will handle Level Two Complaints;
“Business Day”	means, any day (other than Saturday or Sunday) on which ordinary banks are open for their full range of normal business in UK;
“Complaint”	means a complaint about goods and/or services sold by Widecombe Community Hall Charity, about our customer service, or about our employees, volunteers or subcontractors;
“Complaint Handler”	means a Trustee of Widecombe Community Hall Charity who will handle Level One Complaints;
“Complaints Policy”	means our customer complaints policy, available from the Charity’s website;
“Complaint Reference”	means a unique code assigned to a Complaint that will be used to track that Complaint;
“Customer” / “Complainant”	means a customer of Widecombe Community Hall Charity and includes potential customers (no purchase necessary); or a member of the public;
“Data Protection Policy”	means our data protection policy, available from the Charity’s website;
“Decision Letter”	means a letter sent by a Complaint Handler or Appeal Handler to a Customer informing that Customer of the outcome of their Complaint;
“Investigation Report”	means the report prepared by a Complaint Handler or Appeal Handler detailing his/her investigation;
“Level One”	means the first stage in this Complaints Handling Procedure under which Complaints will be handled by a Complaint Handler;
“Level Two”	means the second stage in this Complaints Handling Procedure under which a Customer may appeal the outcome of a Level One Complaint and under which Complaints will be handled by an Appeal Handler;

“Resolution Action” means the available actions to be taken in response to a Complaint as detailed in Section 8.

2. What this Complaints Handling Procedure Covers

1. This Complaints Handling Procedure applies to Complaints pertaining to a) the sale of goods and/or the provision of services by Widecombe Community Hall Charity; b) our customer service; c) our employees, volunteers or subcontractors.
2. For the purposes of this Complaints Handling Procedure, any reference to Widecombe Community Hall Charity also includes our employees, volunteers and subcontractors.
3. Complaints may relate to any of our activities and may include (but not be limited to):
 1. The quality of our customer service;
 2. The behaviour and/or professional competence of our employees, volunteers or subcontractor;
4. The following do not constitute Complaints. Customers raising such questions or matters should be directed to the appropriate person:
 1. General questions about our goods and/or services;
 2. Matters concerning contractual or other legal disputes;
 3. Formal requests for the disclosure of information including, but not limited to, those made under the Data Protection Act.

3. Receipt and Recording of Complaints

1. Customers, or members of the public, may make Complaints to Widecombe Community Hall Charity using any of the following methods: by phone on 01364 621230, email at wch.secretarymail@gmail.com or by writing to the Charity Secretary at Old Walls, Ponsworthy.
2. If a Complaint is made by telephone, the complainant should be asked who they wish to speak to. The name and phone number of the complainant should be recorded, and he/she should be informed that the person will phone them as soon as possible. If it's known that that person is unavailable for a significant time period, the complainant should be offered the chance to speak to another Trustee.
3. All Complaints must be given a Complaint Reference and forwarded to the appropriate Complaint Handler.
4. All Complaints must be acknowledged :
5. If received by email then an acknowledgement email should be sent within **48 hours** of receipt or the following Monday if received on a Friday.
6. If received by post, or the complainant requests contact by post, then a letter of acknowledgement should be sent within **48 hours** of receipt, or the following Monday if received on a Friday.
7. The acknowledgement should inform the Customer of their Complaint Reference, their assigned Complaint Handler and should include copies of Widecombe Community Hall Charity's Complaint Policy

4. **Complaint Information**

1. Customers are advised in our Complaints Policy that the following information should be provided in as much detail as is reasonably possible when making a Complaint:
 1. The Customer's name, address, telephone number and email address, indicating any preferred method of communication;
 2. If the Customer is being represented by a third party, the information set out in Section 4.1.1 should be provided in reference to both parties;
 3. If the Complaint relates to a particular Booking Reference Number ;
 4. If the Complaint relates to a particular employee, volunteer or subcontractor, the name of that persons;
 5. Further details of the Complaint including, as appropriate, all times, dates, events, and people involved;
 6. Details of any documents or other evidence on which the Customer wishes to rely in support of the Complaint;
 7. Details of how the Customer would like Widecombe Community Hall Charity to resolve the Complaint. (Whilst we undertake to make all reasonable efforts to accommodate such requests, however, we are not bound to take any action beyond that which we may be contractually or otherwise legally obliged to take.)
2. If the information detailed in Section 4.1 is missing, insufficiently detailed, or incomplete, the Customer should be contacted within **48 hours** of receipt of the Complaint to request further information.

5. **Complaint Levels**

1. Widecombe Community Hall Charity operates a two-stage complaints handling procedure. Upon receipt, all new Complaints should be handled in accordance with the Level One procedure set out in Section 6 below. It is our policy to use all reasonable endeavours to resolve all Complaints to Customers' satisfaction at Level One.
2. If a Customer is not satisfied with the resolution of their Complaint at Level One, he/she may request that the Complaint is escalated to Level Two in the form of an Appeal at which point the Complaint should be handled in accordance with the Level Two procedure set out in Section 7 below.
3. If a Customer is not satisfied with the resolution of their Complaint at Level Two, he/she has the option of referring the matter to other organisations for External Resolution.

6. **Level One Complaints**

1. The Complaint Handler is determined as follows:

In general Complaints are dealt with by the Charity Secretary or an appropriate Trustee;

If the complaint is about the Charity Secretary, then the Complaint Handler is the Chair of Trustees.

If the complaint is about the Chair of Trustees, then the Complaint Handler is the Vice Chair of Trustees.

2. Subject to delays arising from circumstances beyond his/her reasonable control (including, but not limited to, delays in other persons responding to communications), the Complaint Handler shall have a period of **4 weeks** in which to fully investigate the Complaint and to decide upon appropriate Resolution Action(s), or to Dismiss the Complaint if it is considered to be invalid, in which case the Complaint Handler should inform the Customer of his/her decision in writing.
3. If a delay of over the 4 week period is likely, then a progress report should be sent to the Customer with an indication of when they will receive a full reply.
4. If the Complaint relates to a particular employee, Trustee, Volunteer or subcontractor, the Complaint Handler shall inform the Complainee in question of the Complaint and arrange meetings and/or telephone calls as required to discuss the Complaint. In such cases, the Complainee should not, under any circumstances, contact the Customer directly regarding the Complaint. If the Customer contacts the Complainee directly regarding the Complaint, the Complainee should respectfully refuse to discuss the matter, referring the Customer back to the Complaints Handler. Any such contact should be reported to the Complaint Handler.
5. If the Complaint Handler requires additional information or evidence in support of the Complaint, the Complaint Handler shall contact the Customer using the Customer's preferred method of communication, stating clearly what information or evidence is required. Customers should be respectfully reminded that any delay in their response to such a request may delay the resolution of their Complaint. If a Customer is unable or unwilling to provide information or evidence requested, the Complaint Handler must nevertheless use all reasonable endeavours to resolve the Complaint. If, however, the Complaint Handler considers that it is not possible to uphold the Complaint in the absence of the requested information or evidence, he or she may close the Complaint and inform the Customer of the outcome.
6. The Complaint Handler shall examine and evaluate the Complaint, taking full account of all relevant statements, information, evidence and circumstances and shall maintain full objectivity and fairness at all times.
7. During the investigation of the Complaint, the Complaint Handler shall have access to all records, information, employees, trustees, volunteers and subcontractors that may be necessary to enable him/her to carry out an impartial and thorough investigation.
 1. Access to the following records and/or information is restricted and shall require the authorisation of the Charity Secretary :
 - a) Employment details including any disciplinary actions;
8. Upon reaching a decision, the Complaint Handler shall send an Investigation Report and Recommendation for review and authorisation by the Chair of trustees.
9. In the event that the Chair of trustees does not agree with the Complaint Handler's decision and/or Recommendation, he/she must give reasons for such disagreement and the Complaint Handler shall have to revise his/her decision and/or Recommendation and resubmit it for review and authorisation
10. Upon reaching an agreed decision, the Complaint Handler shall send an Investigation Report and Decision Letter to the Customer by first class post or by email, as appropriate. Decision Letters shall set out the decision, the Resolution Action(s), and shall remind the Customer of their right to escalate the Complaint to Level Two.
11. Copies of the Report and letter should be filed in the Charity's Complaints file..
12. The Customer shall have a time limit of **28 days** within which to make an Appeal if

he/she wishes to escalate the Complaint to Level Two. This must be either a letter or email.

7. **Level Two Complaints**

1. The Complaint Handler for Level Two Complaints is the Chair of Trustees
2. Upon receipt of an Appeal, the Appeal Handler shall firstly acknowledge the Appeal within **5 working days**.
3. A panel of three trustees will further consider the complaint. .
4. Subject to delays arising from circumstances beyond his/her reasonable control (including, but not limited to, delays in other persons responding to communications), the panel shall have a period of **20 Business Days** in which to fully investigate the Complaint and to decide upon appropriate Resolution Action(s).
5. Upon reaching an agreed decision, the Complaint Handler shall send an Investigation Report and Decision Letter to the Customer by first class post or by email, as appropriate. Decision Letters shall set out the decision, the Resolution Action(s), and shall remind the Customer of their right to escalate the Complaint to Level Two. .

8. **Resolution Actions**

When handling Complaints, Complaint Handlers and Appeal Handlers may select from the following Resolution Actions, as appropriate to the facts and circumstances of a Complaint:

1. Part or full repayment of a booking fee;
2. Compensation for damaged goods;
3. Compensation for inconvenience.

9. **Implementation of Resolution Actions**

Upon the conclusion of a Complaint, whether at Level One or Level Two. The Resolution Action(s) settled upon shall require implementation in a timely manner. Responsibility lies with the Appeal/Complaint Handler.

10. **Recording of Resolution Actions**

1. Upon the conclusion of a Complaint and the implementation of the applicable Resolution Action(s), the Complaints/Appeal Handler should log all information in the Charity's Complaints file.

11. **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

1. All Complaints, Appeals, evidence and other information gathered, held and processed under this Complaints Handling Procedure shall be treated with the utmost confidence at all times. Such information may be shared only to the extent required to resolve the Complaint in question in accordance with this Complaints Handling Procedure.
2. All personal information collected by Widecombe Community Hall Charity (including, but not limited to, Customers' names and contact details) shall only be collected, used and held in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and our Customers' rights under that Act as detailed and embodied in our Data Protection Policy

12. **Procedure Review and Responsibility**

1. Overall responsibility for this Complaints Handling Procedure and the implementation thereof lies with the Board of Trustees.
2. This Complaints Handling Procedure shall be reviewed regularly at intervals of not more than **5 years** and shall be updated as required.
3. This Complaints Handling Procedure was adopted on <<insert date>>.
4. This Complaints Handling Procedure was last reviewed on <<insert date>>.

————— END OF