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# DIDSBURY GOOD NEIGHBOURS

*Registered Charity: 1145943*

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## Complaints Policy

This policy was adopted on:

Date 25/05/2022

Review Date 25/05/2024

Chair of Trustees: Sue Thurston

### **Trustees/staff with specific responsibilities:**

Responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees. The Board will nominate a Trustee with responsibility for the implementation and review of the policy, investigation and oversight of serious complaints and reporting any learning from complaints feedback. Day to day responsibility for investigation and management of complaints will be delegated to DGN's Manager as appropriate.

Clear communication with staff at all levels will be undertaken in order to ensure that individual and group responsibilities are understood and embedded into the culture of the charity. The Board, staff and volunteers will all be encouraged to value and encourage feedback on the service and the work of the charity more generally.

# **This is the Complaints Policy of DIDSBURY GOOD**

## **NEIGHBOURS Section A: Scope of this policy**

### **Section B: Policy statement**

### **Section C: Guidelines for implementation**

#### **Section A**

##### **Scope of this policy:**

This policy outlines Didsbury Good Neighbours (DGN) approach to managing complaints and is based on good practice guidance from the Charities Commission. The implementation of an effective complaints policy is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships with the people on whom the charity depends.

Handling complaints well:

Demonstrates our commitment to our stakeholders

Demonstrates our commitment to providing the best possible service

Helps us to find out about things that have gone wrong so we can fix them

Helps us to prevent things going wrong again in the future

#### **Section B**

##### **Our statement of general policy is:**

DGN 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.

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 everyone at DGN knows 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 Complain**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of DGN.

### **Where Complaints Come From**

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in DGN.

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

This policy does not cover complaints from staff (excluding volunteers), who should use DGN's Disciplinary and Grievance procedures.

## **Confidentiality**

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

## **Section C**

### **Guidelines for implementation of the Complaints policy**

#### **Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:**

Written complaints may be sent to Didsbury Good Neighbours at The Neighbourhood Centre, Didsbury Park, Gillbrook Road, Manchester, M20 6WH or by e-mail at [info@didsburygoodneighbours.org.uk](mailto:info@didsburygoodneighbours.org.uk).

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 07749 504298 or in person to any of DGN's staff, volunteers or trustees at any of our events or activities.

## **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 in DGN's complaints log, see **Appendix 1**

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 DGN (for example: member, referring agency)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it 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.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see **Appendix 2**

## **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 relatively informally and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the information on the complaint should be passed to nominated trustee for information within one week.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, in most circumstances they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond. However there may be occasions where this is not immediately possible (eg. safeguarding). In these circumstances it will be up to the nominated Trustee to decide on the best course of action to pursue.

Where a formal response is required complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within 48 hours. 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.

Complainants should receive a definitive reply at the earliest possible opportunity, ideally within two 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 Two**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed the nominated Trustee.

The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within 48 hours of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The nominated Trustee 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 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 two 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.

## **External Stage**

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found 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 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 Two review.

## **Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action. The review is undertaken by DGN's Manager, with support from the nominated Trustee. The Manager is responsible for submitting an annual report to the Board for approval, including recommendations for improvement and change.

## **Appendix 1 -Attached**

## **Appendix 2 - 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

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