



Wealden Volunteering - Complaints Policy

Approved by the Board: July 2026

Next Review Due: July 2028

Chair Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul P. K.', is written on a yellow rectangular background.

1. Purpose

Wealden Volunteering (WV) is committed to delivering high-quality, inclusive and safe services. We welcome feedback and view complaints as an opportunity to learn, improve, and strengthen accountability.

This policy ensures complaints are handled fairly, consistently, proportionately and in a timely manner, in line with Charity Commission guidance and good governance practice.

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints from:

- Volunteers
- Beneficiaries and service users
- Partner organisations
- Members of the public
- Funders and stakeholders

It covers concerns about:

- Services or activities
- Conduct of staff, volunteers, or trustees
- Organisational decisions
- Fundraising practices

3. Relationship with Other Policies

This policy must be read alongside:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Grievance Policy (for staff)

Safeguarding Override

Any complaint that includes a concern about the safety or wellbeing of a child, young person, or adult at risk will be immediately managed under the Safeguarding Policy.

In these cases:

- The complaints process will be paused
- The concern will be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- External agencies may be contacted where required

WV safeguarding procedures require concerns to be acted upon promptly and not investigated internally before referral where appropriate.

Whistleblowing

Concerns raised by staff, volunteers or trustees about wrongdoing (e.g. fraud, illegal activity, abuse, misuse of funds, or serious misconduct) should normally be raised under the Whistleblowing Policy.

The Complaints Policy is primarily for concerns raised by service users, partners and the public.

4. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Wealden Volunteering's services, activities or conduct.

5. Principles

We will ensure all complaints are:

- Taken seriously and handled respectfully
- Managed promptly and fairly
- Investigated impartially
- Accessible to all, with reasonable adjustments where required
- Used to inform learning and continuous improvement

We will not tolerate victimisation or disadvantage of anyone raising a concern in good faith.

6. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made via:

- **In person**
- **Phone:** 01825 760019
- **Email:** office@wealdenvolunteering.org.uk
- **Post:** 79 High Street, Uckfield, TN22 1AS

We will provide support to enable individuals to make a complaint where needed.

7. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered, although they may be more difficult to investigate. Decisions will be based on:

- The seriousness of the concern
- Credibility of the information
- Availability of supporting evidence

This approach aligns with whistleblowing good practice.

8. Immediate Escalation Criteria

A complaint will be escalated immediately where it involves:

- Safeguarding concerns
- Allegations of criminal activity
- Serious misconduct or abuse of authority
- Fraud or misuse of funds
- Significant reputational or financial risk

Such cases may be handled outside the standard complaints process and escalated to senior management or trustees.

9. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, we encourage concerns to be raised informally to enable quick resolution.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Acknowledgement

- Within 8 working days

Investigation

- Carried out by an appropriate staff member not directly involved
- Proportionate and impartial

Response

- Full written response within 25 working days
- If delayed, the complainant will be informed

Stage 3 – Appeal

If the complainant is not satisfied:

- Appeal must be submitted within 10 working days
- Reviewed by a senior manager or trustee not previously involved
- Final response issued within 25 working days

If the complaint involves the CEO, it will be reviewed by the Chair of Trustees, consistent with safeguarding escalation routes.

Stage 4 – External Escalation

If still dissatisfied, the complainant may contact:

- Charity Commission (serious governance concerns)
- Fundraising Regulator (fundraising complaints)
- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) (data protection concerns)

10. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Complaints will be handled sensitively and in line with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where:

- There are safeguarding concerns
- Disclosure is required by law
- Information sharing is necessary to investigate the complaint

Safeguarding procedures make clear that confidentiality cannot be promised where someone is at risk of harm.

11. Safeguarding Responsibilities

All staff, volunteers and trustees must:

- Report safeguarding concerns immediately
- Not investigate safeguarding matters themselves
- Follow safeguarding procedures and escalation routes

This ensures individuals are protected and risks are managed appropriately.

12. Recording and Monitoring

We will:

- Maintain a record of all complaints
- Monitor patterns and trends
- Use learning to improve services
- Escalate serious concerns to the Board of Trustees

Serious incidents may be reported to the Charity Commission where required.

13. Responsibilities

- Board of Trustees: Oversight and governance
- CEO / Designated Safeguarding Lead: Operational responsibility and escalation
- Staff and Volunteers: Reporting and initial handling

14. Equality, Diversity and Accessibility

We are committed to:

- Fair and equal access to the complaints process
- Making reasonable adjustments
- Ensuring no discrimination in how complaints are handled

15. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner in response to:

- Changes in legislation
- Organisational learning
- Updates to safeguarding or whistleblowing procedures