

## **External Grievance Policy**

### **Introduction**

The Trent Rivers Trust (from now on referred to as the 'Trust') recognises the importance of maintaining good working relationships with stakeholders and partners to ensure that the upholding of its values and working practices is maintained across all external relations. The Trust cares about how we interact with stakeholders, what they think and how they feel about us as an organisation and charity.

The Trust encourages open and honest communication from stakeholders to ensure expectations are agreed and standards met. All stakeholders have a mutual responsibility to try to resolve any issues through informal means first. It is recognised that early informal resolution is the most constructive approach and is more likely to lead to an early satisfactory outcome for all concerned. Where the informal approach does not resolve the problem or concerns, the formal procedure (as outlined in this policy) can be followed.

This policy outlines the steps to follow should any external stakeholder or partner need to make a formal complaint and the process of how that complaint is processed, handled and hopefully resolved.

### **Our Policy**

This policy applies to feedback from all stakeholders and partners. This includes individuals, groups and communities, members, supporters, partners, suppliers and the wider public.

This policy does not cover:

- Feedback from our staff and volunteers, as this is covered by other policies.
- Contractual disputes.
- Comments made in the media or by similar third parties.
- Requests for information (including Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Act 2018) or record amendments.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair feedback procedure that is consistent, clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to raise a complaint.

- To publicise the existence of our procedure so that people know how to contact us to raise a complaint, make a comment or provide other feedback, positive or negative.
- To make sure everyone in our organisation knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure that every piece of feedback we receive is treated with all due courtesy, respect and sensitivity, involving only those who need to know in keeping with our Data Protection policies.
- To make sure that all feedback is acted upon fairly and in a timely way.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, fully resolved and that relationships are repaired or rebuilt
- To learn from our feedback to help us to improve what we do.

The Trust will make reasonable endeavours to ensure the policy is conducted in a way that will be thorough, objective and fair. There will be a full, open and honest explanation of the thinking and reasons behind decisions. Confidentiality will be respected by all involved, although it must be understood that the Trust will need to investigate the grievance and will generally need to inform any person or persons against whom any grievance is made. As a result, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

## **Terminology**

What is a comment and what is a complaint?

### Comments

We regard all suggestions, expressions of concern and communications of dissatisfaction as being comments, and we receive a small number of these each year. They provide us with valuable opportunities for organisational learning, and so a record is normally kept. However, whilst we strive to respond in full to each comment we receive, these responses are not part of a formal process.

Unlike formal complaints, it is possible to make a comment anonymously. Please note that, whilst we always value feedback provided anonymously and act appropriately upon it, we cannot respond to anonymous feedback.

### Formal Complaints

A complaint is a serious formal claim that The Trust has failed to meet an organisational commitment as set out in our formal governing documents, or that we have breached one of our own policies, a relevant code of practice, a law or regulation. All formal complaints require thorough investigation, a formal response and a detailed record to be made and kept. Any concerns raised regarding the behaviour of The Trust's staff, trustees or volunteers will also be treated as formal complaints and investigated using our HR policies and procedures. Where we need to follow a formal HR procedure, the findings may need to remain confidential.

Since investigating a formal complaint makes a greater call on our limited resources, we expect anyone making a complaint to:

- Act fairly and appropriately, without prejudice.
- Provide sufficient information for us to be able to understand the complaint, its cause, and a potential resolution, being clear as to the substance of the complaint.
- Be willing to be contacted and engage in the complaints process if necessary.
- Understand that making a complaint triggers a more formal process than a comment.

We keep records of all formal complaints in order to:

- Monitor the progress of the complaint.
- Provide evidence that the complaint was considered, and information about the outcome.
- Identify trends or recurring themes to support organisational learning.

### **Procedure for making a complaint**

#### Comments

To, make a suggestion or express concern or dissatisfaction, you can contact The Trust by email, in writing, or by telephone:

Trent Rivers Trust

Room 7a  
The Old Police Station  
Wharnccliffe Road  
Ilkeston  
DE7 5GF

Tel: 07881229714

Email [enquiries@trentriverstrust.org](mailto:enquiries@trentriverstrust.org)

Please note that our office is open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

When contacting us, please provide as much detail as possible in order to help us act on your feedback effectively. If you are reaching out to raise a concern or express dissatisfaction, please let us know how you think the matter could be addressed or resolved; your ideas and suggestions are always very helpful to us.

#### Formal Complaint

To raise a formal complaint, the issue should be raised in writing to the above postal or email address. Please mark your letter or email for the attention of the RELEVANT PERSON and ensure that your communication is clearly identifiable as being a 'formal complaint' to ensure that it is treated accordingly.

The formal complaint letter/email should include the following detail if possible to ensure swift action and a thorough investigation process;

- that you want to use the formal procedure,
- what the complaint is about,
- who else may be involved
- important information, including dates and events and any supplementary evidence,
- what informal action has been taken and the reasons for it being unsuccessful OR alternatively the reasons you do not consider that an informal resolution would be appropriate, and
- what outcome you wish to achieve

### **What happens next?**

Comments (unless anonymous) will also be acknowledged assigned to a relevant member of our senior staff team to investigate and resolve any issues raised as quickly as possible. We aim to issue a full response to all comments via the same method you used to contact us, but sometimes further investigation is required to enable us to respond. We will aim to respond to comments acknowledging them within 10 working days. We aim to issue a full response to all comments within 20 working days of receipt via the same method you used to contact us, but sometimes further investigation is required to enable us to respond. If we think that this is the case, we will contact you within the first 20 working days to let you know this and explain how long we think it will take before we can reply in full.

Formal complaints will always be investigated by our CEO or a trustee if the complaint relates to them, due to their severity. They will be acknowledged within 10 working days of receipt and a full written response will be issued within 20 working days of receipt.

What if the issue is not resolved?

Finally, if for any reason your complaint is still unresolved, you are able to refer your case to the Chair of our Board of Trustees through communication with the CEO.

External Grievance Policy accepted on May 2021

Matthew Easter CEO

Date: 22 April 2021