

Complaints Procedure

1. Background

Despite our best endeavours there may be occasions when PACE finds itself at odds with a Trustee, volunteer, or stakeholder or member of the public over the way in which PACE or an individual has dealt with a particular matter. PACE wishes to resolve such differences wherever it can.

One of the Charity Commission Hallmarks of an Effective Charity is to have a procedure for dealing with complaints.

What constitutes a complaint? A complaint is where a person confirms that they wish to register a complaint when asked “Do you wish to register a complaint?”

2. Introduction

This document sets out the procedures PACE will follow when it receives a complaint. Complaints are likely to be in one or more of the following areas:

- dissatisfaction with PACE work, unacceptable delay, or failure to deliver.
- disputes regarding policy, procedures or activities.
- discourtesy or unhelpfulness or discrimination.
- behaviour of an individual or groups of individuals

3. The Procedure for Complaints

When someone wishes to register a complaint, the following should be adopted.

3.1 Preliminary stage

The complaint can be received either verbally (face to face or by telephone), in writing, or by email. If not clear, the person should be asked “Do you wish to register a complaint?” and, where confirmed, the procedure below should be followed. In some cases where a verbal complaint has been made the complainant may be asked to confirm the detail of their complaint in writing to aid clarity.

The complainant may not want to make an official complaint but to raise the matter informally, at least in the first instant. Wherever possible, the complainant should meet with a Trustee to explore the issue and attempt to resolve it for the complainant.

3.2 Stage 1 – Understanding the issues.

The complainant will be invited to discuss the complaint with one of the trustees (nominated by the Board of Trustees). This can be done in person or by telephone, whichever is appropriate. A record should be kept of the conversation. The trustee dealing with the complaint will endeavour to resolve the matter.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, then refer to Stage 2 below.

Stage 1 should be completed within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. If for a good reason this cannot be achieved, receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged by the trustee to the complainant with an explanation given as to why 5 working days cannot be met and a revised timescale advised to them.

3.3 Stage 2

If they have not done so already, the complainant should be asked to put their complaint in writing and sent to the Chair of Trustees, or, if it involves the Chair of Trustees, to a trustee duly nominated by the Board (not the trustee investigating Stage 1), marked Private and Confidential, providing as much detail of the complaint as possible.

If the complainant is not able to put their complaint in writing the complainant will be offered an interview with the nominated trustee. The role of the trustee at this interview will be confined to putting the complaint in writing, obtaining the complainant's approval for the content of this, and asking the complainant to sign to indicate they agree with the contents.

The Chair of Trustees, or if the complaint involves the Chair of Trustees, the Board of Trustees, will nominate a trustee who will investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it.

If the complaint involves a volunteer, member of staff or a trustee, the nominated trustee should offer the opportunity for the other parties to put forward their account.

The trustee investigating will ensure that all complainants receive a response in writing within 10 working days of the complaint notes being received. This response will summarise what investigation has been carried out and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter.

If this written response does not resolve the matter, the complainant will be offered an interview with the Chair of Trustees, or if the complaint involves the Chair of Trustees, the Vice Chair of Trustees, to provide the response verbally. This meeting should be held within 10 working days. A written record of this interview will be made, and the complainant will be asked to sign this as a true record.

If the complainant is not satisfied at this Stage, they should ask for the matter to be dealt with under Stage 3.

3.4 Stage 3

Where the complaint is not resolved by Stage 2 the Board of Trustees will set up a panel of 3 trustees to consider the complaint. The complainant will be informed of this approach by a representative of the Board of Trustees.

The Panel will review the decision made at Stage 2 and may seek further clarification from any of the parties involved. A written record of the Panel's proceedings and the decisions reached will be kept on file.

The Panel will notify the complainant of its reasons and decision within 21 working days of having received notice of the complaint. The Panel's decision will be final and will be reported to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees.

3.5 Stage 4

The complainant will be notified that if they remain unhappy with the decision, the complainant may refer the matter to the Charity Commission or other appropriate body.

4. Recording and Monitoring Complaints

All complaints which were not resolved in Stage 1 will be recorded and kept on file by the Chair of Trustees, or if the Chair of Trustees is involved in the complaint, by the Vice Chair . All records of such complaints will be treated as confidential to the trustees of PACE.

The details of all stages must be recorded in general terms as an incident in the Incident File. The Chair of Trustees will make a report once a year to the Trustee Board summarising all complaints which were not resolved by Stage 1, setting out in broad terms the nature of those complaints, how they were dealt with and whether there was a satisfactory resolution.

5. Review

This Complaints Procedure will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees at least every 2 years.

Approved by the Board of Trustees, For Approval 7 February 2023
Reviewed January 2026
Next review date January 2028