

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

City of Sanctuary UK encourages feedback and sees it as crucial to identifying problems our networks, people seeking sanctuary, partners and supporters may face in their interactions with us. We believe that feedback provides us with an opportunity for improvement and that effective and positive complaint handling is an important aspect of the organisation.

This policy covers complaints about the standard of service expected from the City of Sanctuary UK organisation, and the behaviour of the organisation's staff and volunteers in delivering that service.

City of Sanctuary UK oversees networks including groups, streams of sanctuary organisations and local authorities. City of Sanctuary UK is not initially responsible for the handling a complaint received in relation to a group, stream of sanctuary organisation or local authority. As these organisations are independent, we currently have no legal mandate to hold them to account. However, we reserve the right to investigate the complaint on the basis of the procedure below. Any resolution/remedy we could achieve in relation to external independent organisations is limited, and complainants are therefore encouraged to follow the organisation's complaints procedure.

City of Sanctuary UK aims to ensure that its complaints process is as open as possible, so that anyone can easily understand and access it. We see this as key to making sure that any concerns are raised at the earliest opportunity, rather than letting them become more serious. We expect our staff, volunteers and members of our networks to be alert to any expression of dissatisfaction, and to respond to it positively.

Complaints procedure

Definition of a complaint

City of Sanctuary UK will treat as a complaint *“any expression of dissatisfaction, however it is expressed”*. As such, a complaint need not include the word “complain” and may be presented in writing, over the telephone or in person.

If the complaint is raised by someone “on behalf” of someone, we have to consider confidentiality and get the person's written permission for us to deal with the third party. We should ask the person directly, to confirm whether they wish us to treat the matter as a complaint and explain that we need written permission to deal with the third party.

City of Sanctuary UK will help the person making the complaint to obtain support from an independent third party if required.

Complaints about an awarded mainstream institution/organisation

Initial complaints will need to go to the organisation concerned. You may wish to check with a staff member whether the organisation concerned is an awarded institution/organisation.

In the first instance the person should raise the complaint directly with the City of Sanctuary UK staff member with responsibility for the stream, without going into the formal complaint's procedure. Complaints will be handled informally by the City of Sanctuary stream lead in the first instance.

Complaints about an organisation that has been awarded by City of Sanctuary UK will be dealt with by the Chief Officer, unless it falls within a stream which has a UK level steering group, then the complaint will be signposted to the Steering Group. The Steering Group will appoint one of its members to handle the complaint and do the investigation. Complaints should go to the Chief Officer in the first instance who will then let you know who will be handling the complaint.

During the investigation the person handling the complaint will consider the following key questions:-

1. *Has the organisation acted contrary to our values?*
2. *Is what the organisation has done/not done of such a serious nature that it has brought the City of Sanctuary name and reputation into disrepute?*

If following an investigation, the person handling the complaint has sufficient evidence to be able to answer these questions in the affirmative it will pass its report to the Steering Group. The Steering Group will then decide whether to revoke the organisation of its award.

If there is insufficient evidence to answer the above questions the complaints handler will consider the following:-

3. *Has the organisation continued to meet the award criteria?*

If following the investigation, the person handling the complaint has sufficient evidence to conclude that the organisation has continued to meet the award criteria, then an appointed City of Sanctuary UK staff member will work with the organisation to agree targets to be met within a reasonable period. In these instances, it is preferable that the matter is resolved informally between the organisation and the staff member. If the organisation fails to make the improvements the matter will be referred to the Steering Group who will

decide whether it feels it is necessary to withdraw the award. If improvements are not met by the time the award is up for renewal the organisation will not be eligible for reaccreditation until it is able to prove it is now able to meet the criteria.

4. Organisations awarded by a local lead or City of Sanctuary group

Many of our awards, especially in relation to schools, are given out by a local leads e.g. City of Sanctuary group or local. In this instance any complaint about an awarded institution should therefore be handled by the local lead or City of Sanctuary using their complaints procedure. However, we reserve the right to investigate the complaint using the procedure above.

Complaint about a City of Sanctuary group

All City of Sanctuary groups are independent organisations, in the first instance you must contact the group to raise your complaint and use their complaints procedure. The Chief Officer will be able to provide you with the direct contact details.

If after the complaints procedure has been exhausted, the complainant is not satisfied they can raise the complaint with City of Sanctuary UK. However the complaint will only be investigated if the complainant has sufficient evidence that:-

- A group has acted contrary to the values of City of Sanctuary;
- What a group has done, or not done, is of such a serious nature that it has brought the City of Sanctuary name and reputation into disrepute.

Complaints should be sent to the Chief Officer. If following an investigation, the Chief Officer finds sufficient evidence enough to justify the complaint they will refer the matter to the trustees to decide whether the group will be removed from our network.

Complaint about City of Sanctuary UK

If, during accessing any of the services provided directly by City of Sanctuary a person becomes dissatisfied with any aspect, they should first be asked to raise this directly with the staff member responsible for that particular area of work, without going into the formal complaints procedure. The staff member should check with the Chief Officer that it is their responsibility to deal with the complaint and whether it is appropriate to deal with the issue without going into the formal complaints procedure.

If the person is dissatisfied with the staff member response, they should be advised that they can raise the complaint with the Chief Officer. This will trigger the formal complaints procedure.

The Chief Officer will oversee the handling of all formal complaints about City of Sanctuary UK, other than one involving them or one about an organisation which falls within an established stream (see above). The Chief Officer can be contacted by telephone 07376075303, or by email (sian@cityofsanctuary.org)

If complaint involves the Chief Officer, the person should be informed that they can raise the complaint with the one of the Co-Chairs who can be contacted by email – Rebecca Joy Novell – rebeccajohnovell@gmail.com and Yusuf Ciftci – yusufciftci4@gmail.com. This will trigger the formal complaints procedure.

Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Complaint

Where issues are simple and we accept we have done something wrong, we may not need a formal investigation. We can say sorry, try to put things right/or learn from our mistake. Where this is an option, we will do this promptly and within 10 working days.

Any member of staff can deal with a complaint informally (including the person being complained about) and offer an on-the-spot apology. For example, we are late in replying to an email or you are unhappy with something our staff said and they agree they could have said it in a better way. If the complaint is simple but the person who received the complaint cannot handle it because they are unfamiliar with the issue, they will pass it on to someone else as soon as possible.

If we apologise on the phone we won't usually follow up with an email (although individuals may decide to).

If the complaint cannot be easily resolved to the person's satisfaction by the staff member, it should go through the formal complaint's procedure using stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

A complaint will be escalated to this stage when:

- Stage 1 was attempted but the person remains dissatisfied
- The issues are complex or require detailed investigation, or

- The complaint relates to issues that have been identified as serious.

Making a stage 2 formal complaint

Complaints should be as clear as possible. If a complaint is unclear, we may need to ask for more information and if that information is not provided then we may be unable to provide a response.

Due to the complexity of identifying who is responsible for any complaint raised, complaints in the first instance should be sent to the Chief Officer (or to the Co-Chairs if the complaint is about the Chief Officer). The Chief Officer will identify who is responsible for dealing with the complaint.

The Chief Officer can be contacted by telephone 07376075303, by email (sian@cityofsanctuary.org)

The Co-Chairs can be contacted by email – Rebecca Joy Novell – rebeccajohnovell@gmail.com and Yusuf Ciftci – yusufciftci4@gmail.com.

The complaint will be recorded in the central register and a copy in the organisations internal drive. These will be accessible by the Chief Officer and Co-Chairs of Trustees.

The Chief Officer will conduct the annual review of complaints and provide feedback to the board of trustees.

Timescales

If you want to make a formal complaint, then you should do so within three months of the matter you wish to complain about. Waiting longer could make it difficult to look at your complaint, unless we think there are exceptional circumstances. Examples of exceptional circumstances include:

- Only just finding out about the problem
- An extension needed for reasonable adjustment
- Serious personal circumstances

We aim to send a full response within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. If further information is needed, or we need third party consent, the 20 day working days will start from the date we get the information we need. If we are not able to meet this deadline, we will tell you and let you know when we are likely to respond to your complaint.

Who will handle the complaint?

As explained above City of Sanctuary UK may not be responsible for handling the complaint. However as explained above any complaint can be sent to the Chief Officer in the first instance, who will then advise who is responsible for dealing with the complaint.

Cause of the complaint and how to respond

The following steps should be carried out by the person investigating the complaint ('the investigator').

- The investigator must first decide whether or not the complaint qualifies as a complaint and should benefit from recourse to the complaints procedure.
- After the investigation, the investigator should decide whether or not the complaint is justified.
- The investigator should identify the problem caused to the person e.g. frustration, emotional distress.
- The investigator should consider whether there were discriminatory grounds.
- The investigator should assess the problem as serious, moderate or minor (this is to ensure that more time and effort is given to more serious complaints, allowing for greater options for redress).
- If the investigator concludes that the complaint is justified, they should make a recommendations on the redress offered to the complainant. The steering group or board of trustees will then have the final decision on the redress offered.

Outcome

We will give a fair and balanced description of what happened and what conclusions we have reached on the complaint.

If we are able to put things right, we will try to. If we can't put things right, we will be open and honest, say sorry, explain what went wrong (and why) and try to improve in the future. We will also explain what measures are being taken to prevent a similar problem from arising in the future.

Complaints about awarded organisations

The investigator may recommend that an award should be withdrawn. The final decision will be made by either the steering group or board of trustees. In making this decision they will pay due regard to the investigation report, as well as the views of the City of Sanctuary group, local lead and the Steering Group (whichever is applicable).

If an award is not revoked but there are still outstanding concerns with the organisation an appointed City of Sanctuary UK staff or steering group member will work with the organisation to agree targets to be met within a reasonable period. If improvements are not met by the time the award is up for renewal the organisation will not be eligible for reaccreditation until it is able to prove it is now able to meet the criteria.

Complaints about a group

The investigator may recommend that the group is removed from the network. The final decision will be made by the board of trustees. In making this decision they will pay due regard to the investigation report, as well as the views of the City of Sanctuary group, local lead and the Steering Group (whichever is applicable).

Annual Review of Complaints

All correspondence with respect to the complaint should be kept on the shared drive in the central complaints folder, which will be accessible by Chief Officer and Co-Chair of Trustees.

City of Sanctuary UK will conduct an annual review of complaints, to be conducted by the Chief Officer, who will present their findings and recommendations to the Board of Trustees. Any agreed changes to procedures and processes will be implemented as quickly as possible and any identified training needs will be actioned as soon as possible.