

Grief support for
children & young people
in Swindon & Wiltshire



Compliments & Complaints Policy

Document Control:

Version	Date Written	Authors	Date Ratified	Judgement of controls/Amendments
Draft v.0.1	09/06/2020	S.Gillam		
Draft v 0.2	23/09/2021	S.Gillam		Update to address & beneficiaries' definition & who can be a complainant.
V 0.3	22/06/2023	S.Bear	22/11/2023	Amendment to format & to standardise policy.
V 0.4	13/11/2024	S.Bear	13/11/2024	No changes required
V0.5	26/06/2025 & 24/09/2025	K.Brownlee	24/09/2025	Inconsistencies between complaints procedure and appendices clarified. Compliments added.
V0.6	22/04/2026 & 01/07/2026	K.Brownlee	08/07/2026	22/04/2026 - Added right to contact ICO where complaints relate to data handling added, in response to Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 01/07/2026 - Who can make a complaint clarified.
Date of Review:		1 year from ratification then annually or when circumstances call for earlier review.		

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1. Charity Statements:

Statement of public benefit:

Wiltshire Treehouse is for the benefit of bereaved children, young people, and their families, living/educated within Swindon & Wiltshire.

Mission:

Wiltshire Treehouse wants to see a world where every bereaved child and young person can receive guidance and support to help them through their grieving process. We will enable those in our local communities to develop the coping strategies, skills, and confidence they need to thrive.

Charity Objectives:

Provide high quality, relevant bereavement support and guidance to children, young people & their families.

Improve the initial experience of a child bereavement through training and awareness raising.

Secure the continuity of our organisation, ensuring a future of child specific bereavement support.

Be proud of the charity, a great place to work and achieve.

Our Values:

Growth – Providing a safe space for personal development.

Respect – Beneficiaries, volunteers, and staff are treated with respect and dignity within their journey with the charity.

Inclusivity – Services and support available to the whole community.

Empowerment – Working with beneficiaries to enable change on their terms.

Friendly – Open and welcoming.

2. Purpose, Scope, and Users:

Beneficiaries, their representatives, or any individual affected by our services have the right to share compliments and to raise concerns, objections or make complaints about the services and responses they receive from the Charity. All compliments, concerns and complaints from beneficiaries or others will be taken seriously, listened to carefully, investigated fully where necessary, and responded to with respect and courtesy.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- enable beneficiaries to comment on both strengths and weaknesses of the charity by letting us know about things that have gone well, gone wrong or caused concern,
- improve the quality of services by taking notice of the views of people affected by the services, building on what is good and changing what needs improving,
- enable the giving of feedback that can be used to inform future service development and delivery
- ensure that the Charity takes beneficiaries views seriously and will follow up any problems raised,
- protect the interests of individual clients,
- enable beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries, and carers to challenge decisions,
- protect staff and enable them to deal with complaints consistently.

For the purposes of this policy a compliment is any expression of praise or congratulations.

A complaint shall mean a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or concern relating to the everyday operations of the services and activities provided by Wiltshire Treehouse. This dissatisfaction could include the Charity's actions or failure to act, and any delay in acting, which requires the Charity to account for its conduct.

Wiltshire Treehouse operates a "complaints friendly" environment and deeply regrets if we do not meet the expectations or needs of our beneficiaries. We welcome both compliments and complaints. With the procedures for both detailed below.

The implementation of this policy takes immediate effect and will continue to do so until revisions are approved by the board of Trustees. The policy applies to all departments within Wiltshire Treehouse, and all personnel, both paid and voluntary. All areas of the policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation, best practice, or other circumstances indicate necessary.

3. Reference Documents:

Charity Commission Complaints Policy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission/about/complaints-procedure>

4. Compliments & Complaints Procedures:

Compliments Procedure

We really appreciate it when people take the time to tell us when things have gone well. Compliments can be shared with us verbally, or in writing.

Staff are encouraged to share compliments they receive, about themselves, colleagues, or the organisation. This helps us to celebrate success and continue providing quality services.

If the compliment is about an individual member of staff, they will be informed by their Line Manager.

We may use compliments for promotional and fundraising purposes but we will keep these anonymous unless we have express permission to use identifiable information.

Complaints Procedure

Resolving complaints can be constructive and straight forward if the complaint is handled in an organised and structured way following the steps as set out in the procedure. Although staff may feel that a complaint is a personal attack on the service they provide, complaints should be an opportunity to learn from and improve services.

Please be aware that this procedure does not cover matters of law or where a police investigation may be involved.

Some concerns or complaints will by their nature be easy to resolve immediately to everyone's satisfaction in a relatively informal manner. In the first instance we ask that the complaint or concern should be raised with the member of staff or volunteer providing the service, or the Director of the service concerned.

If a complaint cannot be resolved immediately it should be put in writing (assistance can be arranged if required) and sent to the Service Director where relating to a service, or the Business Director if in relation to a business function (such as fundraising). An acknowledgement will be made in writing, an investigation undertaken and in most circumstances a response will be formally made within 14 working days of receipt.

If the complaint is still unresolved an appeal can be made to take the complaint to the formal stage. The complainant should submit the complaint in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Wiltshire Treehouse at the Charity's offices or emailed to chair@wiltshiretreehouse.org.uk within 14 days. A designated trustee will review the complaint and produce a report detailing the complaint, the investigation and the outcomes including any actions to be taken. This will be sent to the complainant within 14 days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the result at this stage, they have 14 days in which to take the complaint to the next formal stage. A Complaints Subcommittee will then be formed within 14 working days comprising of 3 trustees of the Charity. The subcommittee will have 28 days to investigate and produce a report which will be sent to the complainant.

Whatever the complaint Wiltshire Treehouse staff, and where suitable volunteers, should follow the guidance at Appendix 1. addressing the issue in the following phases. (Acknowledgement, Recording, Investigation, Reviewing, Monitoring).

1. Identification:

Any expression of dissatisfaction needs to be investigated so the first step is to identify the nature of the complaint. For example, Wiltshire Treehouse may not have delivered the service which we outlined for delivery, the complainant may feel that the service delivered does not meet their needs or the actions or the attitude of a member of staff may have given rise to the complaint. Many complaints can be resolved at this stage by a simple apology or explanation.

2. Acknowledgement:

It is important that the complainant is kept informed at all stages about what is happening with their complaint.

3. Recording:

All complaints and the action taken need to be recorded. This also applies to those expressions of dissatisfaction which have been immediately resolved. This will enable Wiltshire Treehouse to review all complaints to see if there are trends or similarities that need to be addressed.

4. Investigation:

The Wiltshire Treehouse Complaints procedure has one informal stage and two formal stages. It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved within the informal stage. Where any investigation takes place, this needs to be carefully recorded.

As soon as it becomes apparent that there is a potential disciplinary issue the complainant will be notified that further action regarding the complaint will be suspended until the outcome of the disciplinary proceedings are known.

5. Reviewing:

Complaints will be a standing agenda item at each management Meeting and consideration will be given to whether there are any implications for service delivery or if changes to policies and procedures need to be recommended to the Board of Trustees. The Management Team will set a future date to monitor any changes made because of the complaint.

6. Monitoring:

Monitoring shall be undertaken by both the Management Team and by the Trustee Board.

- The Management Team shall review the number and type of complaints made on a 6-monthly basis.
- The Trustee Board shall receive 6-monthly reports detailing the complaints made and receive any recommendations about changing policies and procedures considering the outcomes of those complaints/comments at subsequent Board meetings.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Complaints Procedure Guidance for Staff

(To be read in conjunction with Appendix 2 Complaints Procedure Flowchart).

Stage 1 – Informal (Time scale 14 working days):

If a complaint or concern is raised to a member of staff or volunteer it can often be resolved immediately in discussion with the complainant. When the complaint cannot be resolved in this manner the member of staff or volunteer should inform their line manager. At this stage the Director of the service involved will handle the complaint and will send a letter of acknowledgement to the complainant within 48 hours. This letter needs to include details of the complaint, what action is going to be taken and the timescales of that action.

Next steps:

- Check if there have been any previous complaints from the complainant. Is this an ongoing complaint or is there a history of dissatisfaction with the services provided?
- If possible, telephone the complainant. Where appropriate make arrangements to visit them. It creates a better relationship if we can go to the complainant rather than asking them to come to the office (lone working measures should be discussed and agreed with a Director before doing so). Find out what the complaint is about, make detailed notes. It may be necessary to make sketches and take photographs. Remember that if the complaint goes past the informal stage your notes will become part of the formal investigation.
- Identify what outcome the complainant expects. (Note if there is any potential financial liability then consult immediately with the Chair of Trustees about any insurance implications).
- Interview the staff member / volunteer / organisation who dealt with the complainant or delivered the service to find out the history of the complaint from their perspective.
- Review the complaint comparing the service delivery against the standards set.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the result of the informal investigation, they have 14 days in which to take the complaint to the first formal stage.

Stage 2 – Formal (Time scale 14 working days): A designated Trustee for Wiltshire Treehouse will review the complaint.

- The relevant Director will collate all the information relevant to the complaint and will brief the designated Trustee.
- A complaint file will be set up for the case.
- An acknowledgement of the complaint will be sent to the complainant explaining what will happen and the timescales involved.
- The Trustee will carry out a review of the complaint and if necessary, interview the complainant and any staff / volunteers/ partner organisations about issues within the complaint.

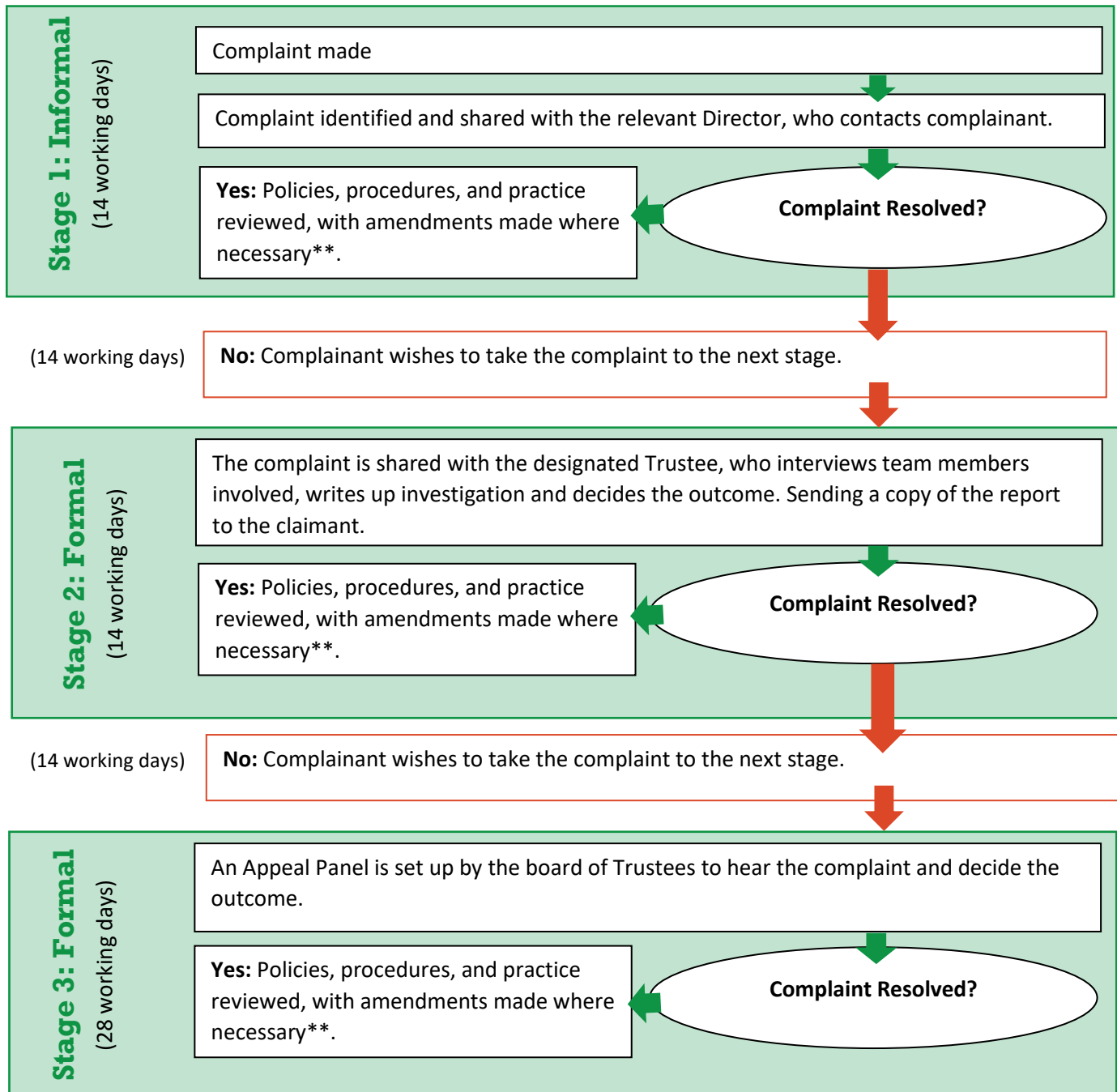
- The Trustee will decide on the outcome of the complaint. And produce a report detailing the complaint, the investigation and the outcomes including any actions to be taken. This will be sent to the complainant.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the result of the Stage 2 investigation, they have 14 days in which to take the complaint to the next formal stage.

Stage 3 – Formal (Time scale 28 days): An Appeal panel made up of three trustees from the board of Wiltshire Treehouse will review the complaint and the previous outcomes.

- The designated Trustee will collate all the information relevant to the complaint and will brief the Appeal panel.
- An acknowledgement of the complaint will be sent to the complainant explaining what will happen and the timescales involved.
- The Appeal Panel will carry out a review of the complaint and if necessary, interview the complainant and any staff / volunteers/ partner organisations about issues within the complaint.
- The Appeal Panel will decide on the outcome of the complaint.
- The Appeal Panel will produce a report detailing the complaint, the investigation and the outcomes including any actions to be taken. This will be sent to the complainant.

Note: if the complaint is in connection with data handling the complainant has the right to escalate the complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if they are dissatisfied with our response. The ICO can be contacted via the details listed here <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

Appendix 2 – Complaints procedure flow chart



** Personal details/records shall be deleted as per the Wiltshire Treehouse Data Protection Policy