

Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure



1. Policy Statements

1.1 Sons & Friends strives for high standards in everything that it does and welcomes feedback from individuals, organisations and anyone who works with us, on all aspects of our work. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us evaluate and improve our work. All feedback will be treated in a manner consistent with the charity's values. This Policy should be read in conjunction with SFC's other related policies, specifically, Safeguarding, Disciplinary and Grievance policies.

1.2 The objectives of the Compliments and Complaints Policy are to:

- Ensure everyone knows how to provide feedback and how a complaint will be handled
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear and acceptable timeframes
- Ensure that compliments and complaints are monitored and used to improve our services.

1.3 We will ensure that we:

- Listen carefully to complaints and treat them as confidential, where possible
- Record, process, store and manage all complaints accurately and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998
- Investigate the complaint fully, objectively and within the stated timeframe
- Notify the complainant of the results of the investigation and any right of appeal
- Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented as a result of the complaint, where appropriate
- Report, on a quarterly basis, the number of compliments and complaints received; the outcomes of investigations and any actions taken.

2. Definition of a Complaint

2.1 A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by an individual, whether justified or not.

An individual may make a complaint if they feel we have:

- Failed to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service
- Delayed in providing a service
- Made a mistake in the way we have provided a service
- Failed to act in a proper way
- Provided an unfair service.

2.2 This policy and procedure relates only to complaints received about Sons & Friends and its services. Individuals who make complaints about partner organisations will be notified in writing within five working

days¹ of receipt of the complaint that they need to complain to the organisation they have the complaint with, and will be provided with contact details, where possible.

2.3 Complaints and compliments covered under this policy and procedure are only those received by an individual or organisation outside of Sons & Friends. Disciplinary, Grievance and Whistleblowing policies are intended for use by staff, trustees, volunteers and other individuals within the charity.

2.4 Where a Complaint may have any possibility of a safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding Policy should be referred to and the staff and trustee safeguarding representatives be consulted as soon as possible. Current Safeguarding Trustee Rep is Ven. Christine Allsopp and staff Rep is Jane Pattullo.

3. Compliments Procedure

Any verbal or written compliments will be recorded by the member of staff receiving the compliment and be passed to the appropriate manager for recording on the Compliments Register. Any member of staff identified as being the subject of, or contributing to any matter giving rise to the compliment will be notified within five working days. Feedback on compliments will be shared with employees at appropriate times such as team meetings.

4. Complaints Procedure

There are 3 stages to the complaints procedure:

- Stage One – Complaint
- Stage Two – Appeal
- Stage Three – Independent Review

Stage one

4.1 We aim to settle issues quickly and satisfactorily by way of an apology, by providing the service required or by providing an acceptable explanation to the individual.

4.2 Individuals wishing to make a formal complaint should do so by emailing enquiries@sonsandfriends.org.uk or writing to: Sons & Friends, 1 Dean Trench Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3HB.

4.3 On receipt, each complaint will be allocated a unique reference number and logged on the Complaints Register. Details of the complaint will be emailed immediately to the CEO.

4.4 An Investigator will be assigned to the Complaint by the CEO. In cases where a Complaint is about an individual, the Investigator will normally be the line manager of the person or team against whom the Complaint has been made. If the Complaint is against Sons & Friends as an organisations the CEO will be the Investigator. If the Complaint is against the CEO, the Investigator will be a Trustee or independent party appointed by the Treasurers.

4.5 Complaints will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt. The complaints will be fully investigated and a written response, either hard copy or email, provided to the complainant by the investigator within 20 working days of receipt. In exceptional circumstances where this deadline is not able to be met, the complainant will be advised of the reasons for this and notified of a revised date for response.

¹ A 'working day' is defined as a day when the Charity's office at 1 Dean Trench St is open

4.6 The Complaints Register will be updated by the investigator and any pending complaints flagged so they are followed up by the relevant manager.

4.7 Individuals will be advised that if they are not satisfied with the response to their complaint, they may appeal to the CEO (or in the case of a complaint against the CEO, to the Senior Treasurer) within 10 working days and progress to Stage Two.

Stage Two

4.8 If a Director was the investigator of the original complaint, the CEO will undertake the appeal investigation personally. If the CEO was the original investigator a Trustee will be assigned to investigate the situation. This person may need to contact the complainant to clarify the issues, conduct the investigation and explore resolution. The complainant will receive written confirmation of the outcome of any Stage Two investigation within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal together with any recommendations/remedies made, such as, staff development and training, reviewing of policies or appropriate improvement to our services.

4.9 Occasionally, investigations may take longer, particularly if the complaint is complex. Should this be the case a holding letter will be sent within 20 working days and a final date given for a conclusion to be reached.

4.10 If an individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome from Stage Two they can request an Independent Review within 10 working days of the date of the outcome letter and progress to Stage Three.

Stage Three

4.11 The Senior Treasurer will review the Stage Two investigation and refer the matter to an appropriate Independent Reviewer. The Independent Reviewer will review all paperwork from the Stage 1 and Stage 2 process and within 20 working days make one of the following recommendations:

- Uphold the action taken at Stage Two
- Implement changes to the Stage Two recommendations/actions.

The Court of Assistants of Sons & Friends has the final say in any actions to be taken by the charity in response to a complaint.

5. Anonymous Compliments and Complaints

Compliments and complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if further information is required to ensure a full and fair investigation.

6. Data Protection

6.1 To process a complaint, we will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides and which other people give in response to investigating the complaint. We will hold this data securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and only use it to help address the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be made known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applies or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

6.2 Under the Data Protection Act 1998, individuals have a right to obtain a copy of their personal data. However, there are exceptions to this right. We will normally destroy compliments and complaints files in a secure manner six years after the compliment has been made or the complaint closed.

7. Monitoring

7.1 Compliments and complaints are an important tool which, alongside other feedback, will allow us to learn more about and improve the services we provide. They offer a useful source of information about how individuals see our charity and how we are serving them. To ensure we can learn from compliments and complaints, the following data will be collected:

Compliments:

- Name and address
- Nature of the compliment
- Date of compliment
- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the compliment, if appropriate.

Complaints:

- Name and address
- Name of person dealing with the complaint
- Date of complaint and response date
- Nature of complaint
- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the complaint
- Lessons learnt.

7.2 Compliments and complaints information will be considered in a series of categories on a quarterly basis by the Leadership Team and every six months by the Sons & Friends Court of Assistants. Wherever possible the data will be used to improve and develop the service.

7.3 The Charity's Audit and Risk Committee will monitor the Complaints Register annually and review the volume and nature of Complaints and the actions taken by the Charity in response.

Adopted: November 2016

Last reviewed:

Next review date: November 2017

Policy owner: CEO (Registrar)