

Procedures in support of Policy Statement – Complaints – dated 16 September 2015

Complaints Policy

1. The policy will be published on the society website and a written statement will be circulated to all volunteers who are likely to come into contact with the public, whilst acting in the name of the society.
2. In the event that the society is notified by Manchester Central Library of a complaint received by them from the public which concerns society activity, it should be relayed to the most senior officer or team leader in charge of the activity immediately. That person, having consulted where appropriate with colleagues, should, once the facts are known, send a written response to Manchester Central Library and ask for a copy of the response made by them to the complainant.
3. In the event of a complaint being received by a volunteer from a member of the public or from a Society member with respect to an action or failure to act on the part of a volunteer acting in the name of the society, the complaint should be notified to the most senior officer or team leader in charge of the activity immediately.
4. The senior officer or team leader should make an assessment of the level of seriousness of the complaint – whether resolution can be achieved quickly and informally or in more serious cases whether a more formal response is called for.
5. If the complaint can be resolved quickly and informally to the satisfaction of the complainant, a written record of the complaint and the action taken to resolve it should be made and reported to both the Society Chairman and the General Secretary within 7 days, and a copy given to the complainant.
6. If it is not possible to resolve the matter quickly the complainant should be asked to state the details of the complaint in written form and this should be passed to both the Society Chairman and the General Secretary immediately.
7. The Society Chairman or the General Secretary should acknowledge in writing receipt of the written complaint within 48 hours and promise a detailed written response within 7 days unless circumstances dictate that a longer time will be required [for example if a key individual is on holiday].
8. A review of the circumstances should then be undertaken by an officer or officers of the society. This may involve conducting interviews with all parties to the complaint and, if appropriate, any witnesses to the event giving rise to the complaint.
9. When all the facts are known the officer with responsibility for conducting the review will agree the wording of a response with the other officers and send a written reply to the complainant.
10. If the complaint is likely to involve suspected criminal activity [e.g. fraud] or action to obtain legal redress [e.g. breach of copyright], the process should be suspended and the circumstances reported, as appropriate, to the police or to the Society's legal advisers.
11. The General Secretary will retain a complete record of all documentation, transcripts of interviews and other material relevant to the circumstances of the complaint. A full report will be prepared and submitted to the trustee body at the earliest opportunity.

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12. Throughout the review process the trustee body will consult the Charity Commission website which contains exhaustive guidance notes on this subject.
13. The terms 'written' and 'in writing' above should be taken to include the use of e-mail. However, unless the complainant specifically requests otherwise, a complaint received by letter should receive a letter in response.