**Complaints Policy and Procedure**

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| **Policy Created:** | **May 2021** |
| **Policy Reviewed:** | **September 2023** |
| **Reviewed By:** | **Lyam Galpin and Phoebe Walsh-Gamgee** |

**Our aim:**

Springbank Community Group CiC is committed to providing a quality service and working in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of all our stakeholders. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our service users, and stakeholders, and, by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

**Definition of a complaint:**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Springbank Community Group CiC – administration, a staff member, process or service – resulting from Springbank Community Group CiC’s failure to meet the individual’s expectations.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should refer to Springbank Community Group CiC’s Grievance Procedures.

**Our policy is:**

* to provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
* to publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
* to make sure everyone at Springbank Community Group CiC knows what to do if a complaint is received
* to make sure that complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
* we respond in the right way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc
* to make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
* we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.
* All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally and dealt with quickly. Our aims are to:

* resolve informal concerns quickly
* keep matters low-key
* enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been referred.

An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction.

**Springbank Community Group CIC’s responsibility will be to:**

* acknowledge the formal complaint in writing
* respond within a stated period of time
* deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint
* take action where appropriate

**A complainant’s responsibility is to:**

* bring their complaint, in writing, to Springbank Community Group CiC’s attention normally within 8 weeks of the issue arising
* explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date
* allow Springbank Community Group CiC a reasonable time to deal with the matter
* recognise that some circumstances may be beyond Springbank Community Group CiC’s control.

**Responsibility for Action:** All Staff, and Directors of Springbank Community Group CiC.

**Confidentiality:**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and Springbank Community Group CiC maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

**Monitoring and Reporting:** Directors of Springbank Community Group CiC will receive annually an anonymised report of complaints made and their resolution and complaints will be dealt with in accordance with Springbank Community Group CiC’s Privacy Policy.

**Complaints Handling Procedure**

If you are unable to resolve the issue informally, we want to make it easy for you to contact us and to provide feedback or make a complaint. These are the ways you can get in touch with us:

1. Face to face: if you are dealing with a member of staff or director and you wish to complain, then please speak to them directly. It may be possible to resolve the issue immediately. However, if that is not possible, then he/she will record the details of your complaint and will send it through to Springbank Community Group CiC Board of Directors.
2. You can call us on 01242 237 854 and your complaint will be documented.
3. You can email us at info@springbankcommunitygroup.org
4. You can write to us at our registered address – Ron Smith Pavilion, Springbank Way, Cheltenham, GL51 0LH

Should the person who receives the complaint be the subject of the complaint you will be informed as soon as is possible and be provided with alternative contact information so that you can register your complaint. No person named in a complaint will be part of the process to investigate the complaint.

In all instances where a complaint is made using the above means, we will contact you within 3 Working Days of receiving the complaint. If you provide us with a telephone number and/or email address, we will contact you by either of those means to discuss the matter further and to officially record all necessary details. Hopefully, we can resolve the matter immediately. However, if the issue is more complex and an investigation is required, we will do the following:

Our Complaints Officer will:

* Record full details of your complaint.
* Record the complaint in our Complaints Register.
* Note down the relationship of the complainant to Springbank Community Group CIC, e.g., donor, sponsor, beneficiary, service user.
* Take all necessary steps to investigate the matter.
* Contact you again within 15 working days of receiving the complaint to advise you of our findings or to give you an update on progress.
* Continue to keep you informed until the matter is resolved to your satisfaction or until all appropriate steps (in Springbank Community Group CIC’s reasonable opinion) to resolve the matter have been taken.

The project manager for the relevant project of Springbank Community Group CiC will handle all complaints and if necessary, will escalate these to the Board of Directors depending on the complexity or seriousness of the issue.

**Resolving complaints**

Our commitment to you is to address each complaint in a sensitive, fair, transparent, equitable, professional, and unbiased manner through the complaints handling process.

We will operate at all times from the premise that any person is entitled to express his or her views on our services and that those views should be taken seriously where this is warranted. We will not, however, tolerate any abusive or discriminatory language or behaviour towards any of our staff, and may decline to investigate a complaint further in such circumstances.

**Stage 1**

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Directors within five working days.

On receiving the complaint, if not already resolved, the Directors will investigate the complaint and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond. If the complaint involves a Director, then the Board of Directors will appoint another investigator and the Director in question will take o further part of the process except to respond to the complaint as part of the investigation

Complaints should be acknowledged within five working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaint’s procedure should be attached. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 15 working days. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and (subject to the terms of Springbank Community Group CIC’s Privacy Policy and Staff Privacy Policy) any action taken as a result of the complaint.

**Stage 2**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Board of Directors. The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Board of Directors may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage 1. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage 1 should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

**External Stage**

Should the Board deem it necessary they may seek external arbitration, both the complainant and Springbank Community Group CIC’s Board of Directors will need to agree on the suitability of any outside arbitration.

**Review of this Policy and Complaints Received**

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees every 12 months and all complaints received (and compliments) will be brought before the Board for review at our regular Board meetings. Through this process of regular review, we aim to improve our services to you and to ensure that any lessons learned are implemented within the organisation.

**Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about a director(s) should not also have director(s) involved in the investigation.

***This policy was approved by the Springbank Community Group CIC’s Board of Directors on the 1st May 2021 and will be reviewed annually***