



St. Andrew's Community Network

Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Scope

This policy is applicable to all staff and volunteers of services currently provided by St Andrew's Community Network (SACN) including Debt and Welfare Benefits Advice, Foodbank and Pantry. The policy will also apply to any future services provided by the organisation.

For the purpose of the St Andrew's Debt Advice service; the policy and procedures are in keeping with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulations.

2. Introduction

This policy sets out procedures for handling complaints from service users, partner organisations or the general public. It is not intended for complaints brought by volunteers or staff. SACN encourages openness and honesty. Where possible we would encourage any concerns to be brought to the attention of the individual member of staff involved, to allow for local resolution but where it is felt necessary, the Complaints procedure should be followed.

The complaints procedure is designed to provide a means of resolving a dispute between SACN and any complainant. It requires staff and the Board of Trustees at every stage to try and resolve the complaint.

SACN makes all reasonable efforts to ensure that the highest possible standards are maintained for all service users and partners. We do recognise, however, that we don't always get it right. When this happens, we encourage service users and partners to tell us, so that wherever possible; we can put matters right and/or make improvements for future service delivery in an attempt to avoid similar issues in the future.

We want to:

- Make it easy for you to raise your complaint.
- Ensure your complaints are listened to.
- Know how you would like us to resolve your complaint.
- Make sure your complaint is handled in a satisfactory manner.

The above paragraphs should be displayed prominently in the centre.

The Complaints Policy and Procedure should be readily available to refer to when needed.

3. How and where to complain

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of our service, you should direct your concerns to the St. Andrew's Community Network Operation's Manager. They will either attempt to resolve the complaint personally or appoint an appropriate person to do so. If the complaint is against the Operations Manager or the complainant feels that their complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily then they may contact Rich Jones (CEO) or Andy Pollard (Chair of Trustees).

Complaints can be made in the following ways:

- *In writing* – marking the letter 'private and confidential' for the attention of either Rich Jones (CEO) or Andy Pollard (Chair of Trustees) and addressing it to:

St Andrew's Community Network
16 Larkhill Lane
L13 9BR

- *By telephone* - St. Andrew's Community Network - 0151 226 3406

Or

- *In person* - to one of the above named people.

4. What Happens Next?

Stage 1 – On receipt of the complaint, the complainant will be invited to discuss their complaint face to face or by telephone within 5 working days. Details of the conversation will be documented and where possible every effort to resolve the complaint will be made at that stage. The written record of discussion should be approved by the complainant and signed accordingly. If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1 the complainant will be informed and the complaint moves to Stage 2.

Stage 2 –The complainant will be contacted and offered an update and an explanation as to the progress of the complaint resolution. The complainant may wish to invite a third party along to any interview. A list of possible advocates can be provided if the complainant cannot identify their own advocate.

If the complaint is against a member of staff or volunteer then that person would usually be interviewed by the person conducting the investigation. The person investigating would usually be the Operations Manager. The details of the investigation interview will be recorded in writing and the member of staff or volunteer will sign to approve the record as being accurate.

The complainant will usually be contacted in writing within 2 weeks with a full report detailing the outcome of the complaint. This is the final response letter. Where this is not possible at 2 weeks; the complainant will be contacted with an update regarding progress of the complaint.

In some circumstances the complainant may be invited in for a verbal response to the complaint. When this happens, the discussion will be recorded in writing and the complainant will be asked to sign to approve the report.

Where there is a delay in the investigation the complainant will be updated at regular intervals with a progress update.

Stage 3 - If the complaint has not been resolved by 4 weeks or if the complainant is not satisfied with the progress of the investigation at Stage 2, the complaint moves to Stage 3. At this point the complaint will be referred in writing, by the person conducting the complaint, to the Board of Trustees who will nominate one or more of the trustees to review the complaint.

Where necessary the trustees will invite the complainant and / or the member of staff for a further discussion. All the documentation will be reviewed and a final response letter written to the complainant within 8 weeks of receipt of the original complaint. Any delay in progress will be communicated to the complainant.

The outcome of the Stage 3 investigation by the Board of Trustees will be final. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complainant at this stage and it is in relation to St Andrews Debt advice, then they should be given the Community Money Advice complaints form who will then investigate. If this is unsuccessful then details of the case will be passed on to the Financial Ombudsman Service* who will investigate the complaint externally. This is *stage 4*.

*See Ombudsman Complaint Form – Appendix 1

5. Recording and Monitoring Complaints

- All complaints will be recorded in writing and kept on file.
- All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the St Andrews Community Network Confidentiality policy

- The CEO is responsible for presenting the Board of trustees with a summary of complaints and outcomes on an annual basis.

6. Restrictions

We will attempt to resolve all concerns relating to its activities. However, there are certain types of complaints that we cannot deal with, including the following:

- A mistake that has not caused financial loss, material inconvenience or material distress;
- Matters that have been (or are being) dealt with by a court or tribunal.

7. Publicising the Procedure

The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for ensuring that information is displayed prominently in the waiting areas and that the policy and procedure is available on the website. Service users and partners should feel encouraged to make a complaint should they wish to.

Policy approved by: Board of Trustees
Policy reviewed: February 2024
Due for Review: February 2025