Aspire
FOUNDATION

Complaints Policy

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Introduction

The purpose of the following policy is to establish a structure whereby complaints can be heard, investigated and resolved. It is not intended that the procedures in this document should replace normal discussion on day-to-day problems and concerns as they arise. It is only when a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of such discussions that further steps will need to be taken.

Aims

- To ensure complaints from parents/carers, the public, and stakeholders are handled promptly, fairly and consistently.
- To maintain constructive relationships and support service improvement.

Principles

The following principles underpin the Complaints Policy:

- Everyone will have ready access to the complaints procedure.
- Complaints will be handled in a conciliatory, as opposed to a confrontational, manner.
- All parties involved have equal rights.
- The proceedings surrounding a complaint, both oral and written, will be recorded and handled confidentially. Appropriate written records will be maintained throughout the complaints process. Audio recording of meetings will only take place where all parties have been informed and have provided consent, and where this is compliant with data protection legislation.
- There will be close monitoring of all complaints, with results shared with the Organisation Strategic Lead of the Aspire Foundation.
- No individual will be treated less favourably because they have raised a concern or complaint in good faith.
- Aspire Foundation is committed to learning from complaints and using feedback to improve services.
- Complaints will be handled in a child-centred, family-centred and trauma-informed manner.
- Where concerns indicate that a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm, safeguarding procedures will take precedence.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

Aspire Foundation recognises parents and carers as children's first and most enduring educators. We value feedback, concerns and complaints as an important part of maintaining high-quality Early Years and Family Help services.

Child Welfare Principle

The welfare and safety of children will be the primary consideration when investigating and responding to complaints.

Statutory Requirements for Early Years Provision (EYFS)

In accordance with the EYFS Statutory Framework, all written complaints relating to the EYFS requirements and the welfare of children will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days.

Records of complaints will be retained for a minimum of three years and made available to Ofsted upon request.

Who can make a complaint?

Any person may make a complaint about services provided by Aspire Foundation, including parents, carers, family members, children, young people, service users, partner agencies, professionals, volunteers and members of the public.

Complaints from Children and Young People

Aspire Foundation welcomes feedback, concerns and complaints from children and young people.

Information about how to raise a concern or complaint will be made available in a format appropriate to the child's age, level of understanding and communication needs.

Age-appropriate support will be available to children and young people who wish to raise concerns or complaints. Children and young people may be supported by a parent, advocate, trusted adult or other representative when making a complaint.

Appropriate support will continue to be offered to vulnerable children and young people throughout the complaints process.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Aspire Foundation takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Centre Lead/Service Lead/Strategic Lead will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Centre Lead/Service Lead/Strategic Lead will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Aspire Foundation will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. A complaint must be made in writing. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the individual members of staff or Centre Lead. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against Aspire staff (except the Organisation Strategic Lead) should be made in the first instance, to the Centre Lead or FS/EY Strategic Lead via the centre office***.*** Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Organisation Strategic Lead should be addressed to (the Chair of Trustees), via one of the centre offices. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Trustees, any individual Trustee or the whole board of Trustees should be addressed to the Clerk to the Trustees via one of the centre offices. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact one of the centre offices. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

This may include:

- translated documentation
- interpreter services
- British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation
- read-aloud support
- advocacy support
- accessible digital formats
- support for individuals with learning difficulties
- support for neurodivergent individuals

Advocacy and Representation

Complainants may be supported throughout the complaints process by a representative, advocate, interpreter or trusted individual.

Where a complainant is a child, young person or vulnerable adult, Aspire Foundation will consider whether additional advocacy support is required.

Early Resolution

Wherever possible, concerns should initially be discussed with the child's Key Person, Family Help Worker, Team Leader or Manager to seek an early resolution.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Organisation Strategic Lead or Chair of Trustees, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Anonymous complaints raising safeguarding or welfare concerns may still be investigated and referred under safeguarding procedures.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints (Regarding Early Years Settings) received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first working day after the holiday period. EYFS complaints must still meet the statutory requirement to notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receipt.

EYFS Complaints Requirements

In accordance with the EYFS Statutory Framework, Aspire Foundation will investigate all written complaints relating to the EYFS requirements and the welfare of children.

Parents and carers will be informed of the outcome of their complaint within 28 days of it being received.

Written records of all complaints relating to EYFS requirements will be maintained and made available to Ofsted upon request.

Parents and carers may contact Ofsted directly at any time if they believe the provider is not meeting EYFS requirements.

Ofsted contact details:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Aspire Foundation, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	Concerns regarding statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs should be raised with GCC
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If safeguarding information comes to light during a complaint investigation, safeguarding procedures will take precedence over the complaints process. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed immediately. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/childrens-social-work-csw-jobs/our-roles-and-teams/our-teams/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub-mash/ https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/children-young-people-and-families/the-role-of-the-lado-the-allegations-management-process/
• Learning and Development	Concerns relating to a child's learning, development, progress, observations, assessments, curriculum delivery or achievement of developmental milestones should initially be raised with the Early Years Manager of the setting.

• Key person arrangements	Concerns regarding key person allocation, consistency of care, relationships with children, communication from the key person or key person responsibilities should be raised with the Early Years Manager of the setting.
• Personal care	Concerns regarding toileting, nappy changing, hygiene, supervision, dignity, clothing changes, personal care routines or welfare should be raised with the Early Years Manager of the setting. Where concerns relate to welfare or safety, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should also be informed.
• SEND Provision	Concerns relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), support plans, MyPlan/MyPlan+, reasonable adjustments, external agency involvement or SEND provision should be raised with the Setting SENDCo or Early Years Manager of the setting.
• Inclusion	Concerns about equality, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, discrimination, participation, reasonable adjustments or barriers to accessing services should be raised with the relevant Early Years Manager.
• Family Help Interventions	Concerns relating to Family Help support, assessments, plans, interventions, professional involvement, communication with practitioners or service delivery should be raised with the relevant Family Help Team Lead.
• Communications with Parents and Families	Concerns regarding communication, information sharing, responses to messages, meetings, records, updates, parent engagement or partnership working should be raised with the relevant Service Lead or Manager.
• Health and Medication Administration	Concerns regarding medicines, medication administration, medical conditions, care plans, dietary requirements, allergies, accidents, first aid or health-related support should be raised immediately with the Early Years Manager. Serious concerns may also be escalated to the Health & Safety Lead.
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our

	organisation should complain through the organisation's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Organisation's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the organisation's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.

Safeguarding Concerns Raised Through Complaints

Where information received during the investigation of a complaint indicates that a child or adult may be at risk of harm, safeguarding procedures will take precedence over the complaints process.

The concern will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, to external safeguarding agencies.

The complaints process may be paused while safeguarding enquiries are undertaken.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Aspire Foundation in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

EYFS (statutory): Early years providers must have a written complaints procedure, investigate written complaints relating to EYFS, keep a written record, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days; records must be available to Ofsted on request.

Data protection complaints (DUAA – June 2026): Complaints about how Aspire handles personal data follow our separate UK GDPR/DUAA Data Protection Complaints Procedure: we acknowledge within 30 days and respond without undue delay before any escalation to the ICO.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Aspire Foundation wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- mediation (where appropriate and agreed)
- an undertaking to review policies in light of the complaint
- consideration of the child's voice, where age and understanding permit
- review of relevant MyPlan, SEND Support Plan, risk assessment or support records where applicable
- an apology.

Learning and Service Improvement

Complaints provide valuable opportunities for learning and service development.

Aspire Foundation will monitor complaints, identify themes, analyse trends and use findings to improve services.

Learning from complaints will be reported regularly to senior leaders and the Board of Trustees.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Managing Unreasonable, Vexatious or Persistent Complaints

Aspire Foundation recognises the right of individuals to raise concerns and complaints.

Where complainants behave in a manner that is abusive, threatening, discriminatory or unreasonable, appropriate measures may be taken to protect staff and maintain the effectiveness of the complaints process.

Repeated complaints regarding issues that have already been fully investigated and concluded may not be considered further unless significant new evidence is presented.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead (unless they are about the Organisation Strategic Lead), via one of the centre offices. This must be done in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form).

The FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 working days.

Within this response, the FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead may delegate the investigation to another member of the organisation's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Children may be consulted where appropriate and in line with their age and stage of development.
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation
- For complaints relating to EYFS provision, SEND support, inclusion or Family Help interventions, the investigator may consult with relevant practitioners, SENCOs, Family Help staff and external professionals as appropriate.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead will provide a formal written response within 20 working days of the date of receipt of the complaint. (For EYFS complaints, we must notify the outcome within 28 days of receipt.)

If the FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Aspire Foundation will take to resolve the complaint.

The FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Organisation Strategic Lead, or a member of the Trustees (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Organisation Strategic Lead or member of the Trustees must be made to the Clerk, via one of the centre offices.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire board of Trustees or
- the majority of the Trustees

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the board of Trustees. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with Organisation Strategic Lead or members of the Board of Trustees complaints committee, which will be formed of a number of, impartial, Trustees (ideally 3). This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via one of the centre offices, within 5 working days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 working days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of the Organisation Strategic Lead or Trustees with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee, if required. If there are fewer than three Trustees from Aspire Foundation available, the Clerk may attempt to source any additional, independent representatives through other organisations. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if an employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 15 working days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 10 working days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.
- consider whether any lessons learned require amendments to policy, procedure, staff training or supervision arrangements.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Aspire Foundation with a full

explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 working days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to escalate their complaint if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire board of trustees or
- the majority of the trustees

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent committee members.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Aspire Foundation will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Next Steps - External Routes

Depending upon the nature of the complaint, complainants may also contact:

Early Years Provision

- Ofsted

Family Help and Family Support Services

- Gloucestershire County Council

Safeguarding Concerns

- Gloucestershire MASH
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Data Protection Matters

- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Education Related Complaints

- Department for Education

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Child, young person or service user's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the child, young person or service user (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**
Is this complaint related to: EYFS, Family Help, SEND, Safeguarding, Other.
Desired outcome:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the organisation about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Complaint reference number:
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix 1 – EYFS Complaint Register

Complaint Reference Number:	
Date received:	
Child involved:	
Nature of complaint:	
Welfare requirement involved:	
Investigation completed by:	
Outcome:	
Date outcome shared:	
Lessons learned:	
Date closed:	

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the organisation in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

All Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- listening professionally to concerns and complaints
- responding courteously and respectfully
- recording complaints accurately
- reporting complaints promptly to managers
- maintaining confidentiality
- prioritising children's welfare
- supporting families through the complaints process
- supporting early resolution wherever possible
- cooperating with investigations

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
    - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
    - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint

  - consideration of records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator

(this could be the FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead/ designated complaints trustee or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, FS/EY Strategic Lead or Organisation Strategic Lead, Chair of Trustees, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure
- maintain the EYFS complaints register (Appendix 1)
- monitor themes and trends
- report reoccurring issues to senior leaders and trustees
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Complaints Register

A central complaints register will be maintained and will record:

- complaint reference number
- date received
- complainant details
- nature of complaint
- actions taken
- outcome
- learning identified
- date closed

Clerk to the Trustees

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to organisation complaints, relevant childcare, family support and safeguarding legislation, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, organisation and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant

- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

  If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the organisation are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minute
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the organisation has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

  No trustee may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the organisation and the complainant

  We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

  Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

  Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

  The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

  If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Learning from Complaints

Aspire Foundation will review complaints regularly to identify trends, lessons learned, training requirements and opportunities for service improvement.

Anonymised complaint themes will be reported to senior leaders and the Board of Trustees.