



Complaints & Concerns Policy

Document Control

ITEM	DETAILS
Policy Number	GP07
Policy Title	Complaints & Concerns Policy
Policy Owner	Board of Directors
Approved By	Board of Directors
Version	1.0
Approval Date	May 2026
Review Date	May 2028
Applies To	Directors, Committee Members, Volunteers, Contractors, Consultants and anyone acting on behalf of Gravesham Pride CIC
Related Policies	Governance Handbook, Code of Conduct, Speaking Up (Whistleblowing) Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility Policy
Related Legislation	Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 2018, UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

1. Purpose

Gravesham Pride CIC is committed to providing welcoming, inclusive and professionally organised events and activities for everyone who engages with our organisation.

We recognise that, despite our best efforts, concerns or complaints may occasionally arise.

We believe that complaints should be viewed as valuable feedback rather than criticism.

They provide opportunities to identify where improvements can be made, strengthen our governance and improve the experience of volunteers, partners, performers, sponsors, stallholders and members of the public.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, fair and transparent process for receiving, considering and responding to complaints and concerns relating to the activities of Gravesham Pride CIC.

We are committed to:

- listening respectfully
- treating everyone fairly
- considering concerns objectively
- responding proportionately
- learning from feedback
- continuously improving our organisation

Where possible, we will seek to resolve concerns quickly, informally and positively.

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints or concerns relating to the activities, services or conduct of Gravesham Pride CIC.

Complaints may be raised by:

- members of the public
- volunteers
- performers
- stallholders
- sponsors
- contractors
- delivery partners
- community organisations
- event attendees
- anyone interacting with Gravesham Pride CIC

This policy may be used where concerns relate to:

- customer service
- event management
- accessibility
- communication
- volunteer conduct
- Director conduct
- behaviour inconsistent with organisational values
- failure to follow organisational policies
- equality, diversity and inclusion issues

- any aspect of the organisation's activities.

This policy should **not** normally be used for:

- safeguarding concerns
- suspected criminal activity
- fraud
- serious governance concerns
- whistleblowing matters

These should instead be managed under the appropriate organisational policy.

3. Definitions

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the actions, decisions, services or conduct of Gravesham Pride CIC or someone acting on its behalf. A complaint may relate to a specific incident or to the way an issue has been managed.

Concern

A concern is information suggesting that something may not be working as intended or could be improved. Concerns may not amount to formal complaints but should still be taken seriously.

Complainant

A complainant is any individual or organisation raising a complaint or concern under this policy.

Responding Officer

For the purposes of this policy, the Responding Officer is normally the Chair or another Director nominated to consider the complaint. Where the complaint relates to the Chair, another Director will manage the complaint.

4. Our Commitment

Gravesham Pride CIC is committed to creating a culture where feedback is welcomed. We believe that people should feel comfortable raising concerns without fear of being ignored or treated unfairly.

We will:

- listen respectfully
- remain impartial
- consider information objectively
- maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- communicate clearly
- seek fair and proportionate outcomes
- use complaints as opportunities to improve

Where mistakes have been made, we will acknowledge them, learn from them and take reasonable steps to prevent similar issues occurring in the future.

We ask everyone engaging with this process to do so respectfully and constructively.

5. Policy

5.1 General Principles

Every complaint or concern received by Gravesham Pride CIC will be considered fairly and objectively.

We recognise that many concerns can be resolved quickly through open and respectful discussion.

Where possible, we encourage concerns to be raised promptly so that they can be addressed before they escalate.

We will always seek to resolve matters at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

5.2 What Can Be Complained About?

Complaints may relate to matters including:

- organisation of events
- volunteer conduct
- behaviour of Directors
- customer service
- accessibility
- equality and inclusion
- communication
- event facilities
- health and safety arrangements
- partnership working;
- organisational decisions

This list is not exhaustive.

Any matter affecting the services, activities or reputation of Gravesham Pride CIC may be considered where appropriate.

5.3 Matters Managed Under Other Policies

Some concerns require a different organisational response. Examples include:

- safeguarding concerns
- whistleblowing
- allegations of criminal behaviour
- data breaches
- conflicts of interest

Where this occurs, the concern will be referred to the appropriate policy and the individual will be informed wherever appropriate.

5.4 Informal Resolution

Many concerns can be resolved quickly through discussion.

Where appropriate, Gravesham Pride CIC will seek to resolve issues informally before progressing to a formal complaint.

Informal resolution may include:

- providing clarification
- offering an explanation
- correcting misunderstandings
- apologising where appropriate
- agreeing practical solutions

Informal resolution does not prevent someone from making a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied.

5.5 How to Raise a Complaint

Complaints or concerns may be raised verbally or in writing.

Where possible, written complaints are encouraged as they provide a clear record of the issues being raised.

Complaints should include, where possible:

- the name and contact details of the complainant
- a clear description of the complaint
- the date, time and location of the incident (where applicable)
- the names of any individuals involved, if known
- details of any action already taken
- the outcome being sought

Anonymous complaints will be considered where sufficient information is provided, although anonymity may limit the organisation's ability to investigate or provide feedback.

5.6 Receiving Complaints

Complaints should normally be submitted to the Chair of the Board.

Where the complaint concerns the Chair, it should be submitted to another Director who will assume responsibility for managing the complaint.

All complaints will be acknowledged as soon as reasonably practicable.

Where additional information is required, the complainant may be contacted to clarify the issues raised.

Receiving a complaint does not imply that the organisation accepts the matters raised. Every complaint will be considered objectively before any conclusions are reached.

5.7 Assessing the Complaint

Once received, the complaint will be reviewed to determine:

- whether it falls within the scope of this policy
- whether immediate action is required
- whether another organisational policy should be used instead
- whether further information is required
- whether the complaint can be resolved informally
- whether a formal review is required

Where a complaint is more appropriately dealt with under another policy, the complainant will normally be informed and the matter redirected accordingly.

5.8 Investigating Complaints

Where a formal investigation is required, Gravesham Pride CIC will seek to ensure that the process is fair, impartial and proportionate. The individual considering the complaint may:

- review relevant documents
- speak with those involved
- obtain information from witnesses where appropriate
- consider organisational policies
- seek advice from the Board where necessary

Investigations will be conducted as promptly as reasonably practicable, recognising that some matters may require additional time depending upon their complexity.

Everyone involved is expected to cooperate honestly and respectfully throughout the process.

5.9 Responding to Complaints

Once the complaint has been considered, the complainant will normally receive a response explaining:

- whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld
- the reasons for the decision
- any action taken or proposed
- whether organisational learning has been identified

Where confidentiality obligations apply, the organisation may be unable to disclose specific details relating to individuals or internal governance matters. Responses will therefore balance transparency with the privacy rights of others.

5.10 Resolution

Depending upon the circumstances, complaints may be resolved by:

- providing an explanation
- correcting factual misunderstandings
- offering an apology where appropriate
- implementing improvements
- reviewing organisational procedures
- providing additional guidance or training
- taking appropriate governance action

Our aim is always to achieve a fair and proportionate resolution while maintaining positive relationships wherever possible.

5.11 If the Complainant Remains Dissatisfied

If a complainant believes that their complaint has not been managed fairly or that relevant information has not been properly considered, they may request that the matter be reviewed by the Board of Directors.

A review is not a complete reinvestigation. Its purpose is to consider whether:

- the complaint was managed fairly
- the policy was followed appropriately
- relevant information was considered
- the decision reached was reasonable

Following the review, the Board's decision will normally be final.

Nothing in this policy prevents an individual from seeking independent advice or referring matters to an appropriate external organisation where this is considered necessary.

5.12 Confidentiality

Complaints will be handled as confidentially as reasonably practicable.

Information will only be shared with those who have a legitimate need to know in order to consider or investigate the complaint.

Everyone involved in the process is expected to respect confidentiality and avoid discussing complaints unnecessarily.

Complete confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed where:

- safeguarding concerns arise
- criminal activity is suspected
- legal obligations require disclosure
- disclosure is necessary to protect individuals from harm

Where possible, individuals will be informed if information needs to be shared beyond those directly involved.

5.13 Records

Gravesham Pride CIC will maintain appropriate records of formal complaints. Records may include:

- the nature of the complaint
- the actions taken
- the outcome
- any lessons learned

Complaint records will be retained securely and handled in accordance with the Confidentiality & Data Protection Policy. Only those with an appropriate organisational need will have access to complaint records.

5.14 Learning and Continuous Improvement

Complaints and concerns provide valuable opportunities to improve the organisation.

Where themes or recurring issues are identified, Gravesham Pride CIC will seek to:

- improve policies and procedures
- strengthen governance arrangements
- improve volunteer guidance
- enhance accessibility and inclusion
- improve communication
- reduce the likelihood of similar issues occurring in the future

Our aim is not simply to resolve complaints, but to use feedback constructively to improve the experience of everyone who engages with Gravesham Pride CIC.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- promoting a positive complaints culture
- ensuring complaints are managed fairly
- considering complaints referred for Board review
- identifying organisational learning
- ensuring improvements are implemented where appropriate

6.2 Chair

The Chair is responsible for:

- receiving complaints where appropriate
- ensuring complaints are managed objectively
- maintaining appropriate records

- reporting significant governance issues to the Board.

Where the complaint concerns the Chair, another Director will assume these responsibilities.

6.3 Directors

Directors are expected to:

- treat complainants respectfully
- cooperate with complaint investigations
- maintain confidentiality
- support organisational learning arising from complaints

6.4 Volunteers

Volunteers are expected to:

- treat anyone raising a complaint with courtesy and respect
- cooperate with enquiries where appropriate
- maintain confidentiality
- support improvements identified following complaints

7. Monitoring and Compliance

The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively and that complaints are managed fairly, consistently and in accordance with the values of Gravesham Pride CIC.

The Board will monitor the effectiveness of this policy by:

- reviewing themes and trends arising from complaints
- considering lessons learned
- monitoring the implementation of improvements
- reviewing governance arrangements where necessary
- ensuring complaints are managed proportionately and without unnecessary delay

Complaint information may be reviewed periodically to identify opportunities for organisational learning and continuous improvement.

Individual complaint details will remain confidential and will only be shared where there is a legitimate organisational need to do so.

The Board is committed to creating a culture where feedback is welcomed and used positively to improve the organisation.

8. Equality Statement

Gravesham Pride CIC is committed to ensuring that everyone can raise a complaint or concern fairly, confidently and without discrimination.

This policy will be applied consistently regardless of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex

- sexual orientation

Reasonable adjustments will be made wherever practicable to ensure complaints can be raised and managed in an accessible manner.

This may include providing information in alternative formats, allowing additional time or considering different methods of communication where appropriate.

Every complaint will be assessed on its own merits.

9. Policy Review

This policy will normally be reviewed every two years. An earlier review may take place where:

- legislation changes
- organisational learning identifies improvements
- recurring complaints indicate that changes are required
- governance arrangements change
- the Board determines that amendments are necessary

The Board of Directors is responsible for approving any revisions to this policy.

Appendix A – Practical Examples

The following examples illustrate how this policy should be applied in practice.

Example 1 – Accessibility

Situation

An attendee advises that they were unable to access part of the event because appropriate accessible facilities were not available.

Expected Practice

The concern is acknowledged respectfully, considered objectively and used to review future event planning and accessibility arrangements.

Inappropriate Practice

Ignoring the concern or dismissing it without consideration.

Example 2 – Volunteer Conduct

Situation

A member of the public reports that a volunteer behaved in an inappropriate or discourteous manner during the event.

Expected Practice

The complaint is considered fairly, information is gathered where appropriate and the matter is addressed in accordance with organisational policies.

Inappropriate Practice

Making assumptions without establishing the facts or discussing the matter publicly.

Example 3 – Event Facilities

Situation

A stallholder complains that essential event information was not communicated before the event.

Expected Practice

The complaint is reviewed objectively and communication processes are considered for future improvement.

Inappropriate Practice

Rejecting the complaint without reviewing what information was provided.

Example 4 – Communication

Situation

A sponsor advises that emails requesting information were not responded to within a reasonable timeframe.

Expected Practice

The matter is reviewed, an explanation provided where appropriate and opportunities identified to improve communication.

Inappropriate Practice

Ignoring the complaint or becoming defensive.

Example 5 – Equality and Inclusion

Situation

An attendee believes they experienced discrimination during a Pride event.

Expected Practice

The concern is considered seriously, relevant information is gathered and the matter is reviewed alongside the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility Policy.

Inappropriate Practice

Dismissing the concern without considering the circumstances.

Example 6 – Director Conduct

Situation

A community organisation raises concerns about the behaviour of a Director during partnership discussions.

Expected Practice

The complaint is managed objectively by another appropriate Director and considered fairly in accordance with organisational governance arrangements.

Inappropriate Practice

Allowing the Director concerned to investigate the complaint about themselves.

Example 7 – Complaint Not Upheld

Situation

Following investigation, the available evidence does not support the complaint.

Expected Practice

The complainant receives a respectful explanation of the decision and the reasons for the outcome.

Inappropriate Practice

Criticising the complainant simply because the complaint could not be substantiated.

Key Principles

Whenever a complaint or concern is received, remember:

- Listen respectfully.
- Remain impartial.
- Consider the facts.

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- Treat everyone fairly.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Respond proportionately.
- Learn from feedback.

Complaints are opportunities to improve, not problems to be avoided.

Appendix B – Related Legislation and Governance Documents

Primary Legislation

This policy should be read alongside relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Human Rights Act 1998

Related Gravesham Pride CIC Governance Documents

This policy should be read alongside the following Gravesham Pride CIC governance documents:

- Articles of Association
- Governance Handbook
- GP01 – Code of Conduct
- GP02 – Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility (EDIA) Policy
- GP03 – Safeguarding Policy
- GP04 – Conflict of Interest Policy
- GP05 – Confidentiality & Data Protection Policy
- GP06 – Speaking Up (Whistleblowing) Policy
- GP08 – Volunteer Management Policy
- GP09 – Volunteer Code of Conduct
- GP10 – Health, Safety & Safe Working Policy
- GP11 – Risk Management Policy
- GP12 – Financial Management Policy
- GP13 – Document Control & Records Management Policy
- GP14 – Communications, Branding & Social Media Policy
- GP15 – Environmental Sustainability Policy
- GP16 – Event Governance & Delivery Policy

Good Governance Principles

This policy supports Gravesham Pride CIC's commitment to:

- Openness
- Fairness
- Respect
- Accountability
- Inclusion
- Continuous Improvement
- Community Confidence

Review and Version Control

This appendix will be reviewed whenever there are significant changes to legislation, recognised good practice or related Gravesham Pride CIC governance documents.

Our Promise

GOVERNANCE POLICY GP07 - Complaints & Concerns Policy

Gravesham Pride CIC is committed to listening to feedback with openness, fairness and respect. We recognise that complaints and concerns provide valuable opportunities to strengthen our organisation, improve our events and better serve the communities we celebrate.

By responding professionally, learning from experience and treating everyone with dignity, we will continue to build an organisation that reflects our values of inclusion, transparency and community leadership.