

Complaints Policy

March 2025

STATUS: APPROVED

Our Strategic objectives relating to young people with high learning potential, their parents and carers, and their schools:

- *Empowering Young People*
- *Empowering Parents*
- *Creating a Community*
- *Advocating for Needs and Rights*
- *Strengthening our sustainability and effectiveness*

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1. Overview / Purpose

The aims of this policy are to ensure that Potential Plus UK:

- Consistently provides the highest quality of service possible
- Takes a positive, proactive approach when dealing with complaints
- Uses complaints as opportunities to inform and improve policy and practice
- Minimises the risk to reputational damage by skilful, swift handling of complaints, including following up with the complainant to explain what action has been taken

2. Scope

- All employees, volunteers, casual workers and Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the spirit and the letter of the complaints policy are followed
- Complaints of all kinds are covered by this policy, e.g. complaints -
 - By a family or school member, or by a member of the public about any aspect of the charity or a representative of the charity
 - By an employee, casual worker, volunteer or Trustee made about a colleague
 - By a member complaining about another member
 - About written materials, e.g. website content, advice sheets, assessment reports
 - About a service, e.g. a workshop or event

3. Definitions

None needed

4. Policy

4.1 Complaints from members

- Complaints or issues of concern raised by individuals inside or outside the organisation must be taken seriously and responded to quickly and positively
- The complaints procedure must be open and easily accessible via the website, or in the Staff Handbook for employees, volunteers, casual workers and Trustees
- All complaints must be handled confidentially and shared only with those people involved
- Complaints must be viewed as learning opportunities and action taken to improve services
- At the discretion of the CEO, complainants may be offered -
 - A full or part refund
 - An alternative service free of charge
 - A verbal or written apology
 - Where possible, withdrawal of an item so it can be improved, e.g. a factsheet
 - A discussion to determine what the complainant is seeking
- Where possible, the complainant should be informed of action resulting from the complaint

4.2 The outcomes of investigations

- Where an investigation has been carried out, the following outcomes may apply:
 - a. no substance has been found for the complaint and therefore no action will be taken
 - b. there has been a minor infringement of good practice which will be dealt with by supervision and training
 - c. there has been a serious infringement and the member of staff/volunteer will be given a formal warning
 - d. conduct has been seriously unsatisfactory requiring dismissal/removal from the service subject to employment law and other legislation
- Members of staff and volunteers have the right to appeal against recommendations made
 - Appeals, with clear reasons for the dissatisfaction, must be made in writing within 30 working days of the date of the decision.
 - Appeals will be assessed by the CEO to determine what further investigation (if any) is necessary. If the CEO has already been involved in the complaint, the Chair of Trustees will assess the appeal
 - The CEO may choose to appoint an independent investigator at this stage
 - Following any further investigation, a report and recommendations will be produced for the Board of Trustees outlining which outcome is applicable:
 - that the original decision should be upheld
 - or that the original decision should be rescinded
 - or that the original decision should be revised and that a more/less severe sanction be imposed.

4.3 Complaints against a member of the Board of Trustees or the Chief Executive

- In a complaint is made about a Board member, they will take no part in the Trustee discussions or decisions relating to the complaint
- If a complaint is made about the CEO, the Chair of Trustees will carry out the roles and responsibilities assigned to the CEO in this policy, along with a second nominated Trustee in case of an appeal or similar issue
- If a complaint is made about the Chair of Trustees, the Deputy Chair of Trustees plus a nominated trustee will carry out the roles outlined for the CEO in this policy

4.4 Whistleblowing

- Members of staff and volunteers have the right to make a complaint about a colleague, and this must be viewed positively and proactively. They should not be harassed or discriminated against for raising the issue.
- If it cannot be dealt with informally, the CEO should follow the procedures in this policy

5. Monitoring and Reporting

The CEO will:

- Keep a record of complaints and look for patterns to inform development needs
- Report complaints to the Board of Trustees and outline the action taken, annually
- If the complaint is serious enough to risk causing immediate harm to the reputation of the charity, the Chair of Trustees must be informed immediately

The Board of Trustees will:

- Receive an annual report of complaints and ensure that action has been taken to remedy potential risks to the quality of service or to reputational damage

6. Training

- Induction for employees, casual workers, volunteers and Trustees must include information about this policy
- The CEO will ensure that employees, casual workers and volunteers are reminded of their responsibilities regarding complaints annually

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The Chief Executive must:

- Be informed of all complaints or concerns as soon possible
- Ensure that they are dealt with quickly and positively
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained, sharing information on a 'need to know' basis only
- Keep records of complaints securely for 25 years to comply with insurer's requirements

If an Investigator is appointed to deal with an internal complaint, they must:

- Seek clarification, full details and supporting evidence from the complainant
- Meet all people involved in the complaint to seek evidence
- If appropriate, meet with both /all parties together with an independent observer present to take notes and, if requested, a nominated person to accompany individuals
- Report their findings and recommendations to the CEO who will send a copy to both parties, so that accuracy can be agreed prior to action being taken

The Board of Trustees must:

- Receive an annual report of complaints, seek patterns and ensure action has been taken
- Take on the role of the CEO for complaints made about the CEO or Chair of Trustees

8. Related Standards, Policies and Processes

- Whistleblowing Policy

9. Revision History

Version:	Date Approved:	Approved by:	Owner:	Author:	Summary of Change:	Review Date:
20250304	4 March 2025	Board of Trustees	Board of Trustees	JM	New policy format, reduced text	March 2028

APPENDIX A: Complaints procedure and timescale

Complaint or concern raised	Timescale
a. If in writing a member of staff will acknowledge receipt and pass on information on the procedure and next steps	5 working days
b. A member of staff has an informal conversation to identify the nature of the issue	5 working days
c. If not resolved, complainant is requested to provide the complaint in writing	5 working days
d. CEO resolves issue informally between identified parties (if possible, and logs the outcome)	5 working days
e. Complaint not resolved or of a serious nature	
f. CEO receives further written information about the complaint	5 working days
g. CEO agrees and informs complainant how investigation will take place, i.e. by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO • Appointed investigator • Chair of Trustees 	5 working days
h. Investigation carried out	30 working days
i. Complainant informed in writing about outcome and person complaint was about copied in to letter or email	5 working days
j. Learning from the complaint results in improvement or change	As soon as possible
k. Report to Board	Next Board meeting
l. If either party chooses to use the right to appeal, the CEO (or Chair of Trustees if complaint has already been heard by CEO) will assess the appeal and, if sanctioned, will carry out further investigation or appoint an independent investigator	30 working days
m. Final report and decision produced for Board of Trustees to ratify	10 working days