



West Oxford Community Association

Complaints Policy

Approved by WOCA Committee: January 2014
Date of next review: January 2017

Policy Statements

West Oxford Community Association (WOCA) is a small organisation, committed to operating with shared values and consensus.

We aim to provide a high quality experience to the people who make use of the community centre and the association's other services. We welcome feedback (both positive and negative) from people as this helps to improve the services we offer.

We recognise that it is very important for people to be able to complain, and that they feel safe in doing so. Any complaint will be treated as a serious matter and responded to appropriately. Any complaint should initially be made to the Centre Manager.

Most complaints can usually be resolved informally. We would aim to support an individual to reach a resolution of any cause of dissatisfaction quickly and appropriately.

This policy also aims to protect WOCA against spurious or malicious complaints.

Procedures

Informal Complaints

If you have a complaint it is a good idea to talk to the people directly involved, to try to get the issue resolved. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of these informal discussions then you can follow the formal complaints procedure.

Formal Complaints

Help in making a formal complaint

When making a formal complaint it is often useful to have an advocate. This person, of your choice, can support you to put your case effectively. They can be any person: for example a friend, a member of an advocacy organization, or anyone else you feel is appropriate.

Putting the formal complaint in writing

If your complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily through dealing with it informally you need to put your complaint in writing. If necessary, and if you feel it is appropriate, someone at WOCA can advise you how to put your complaint in writing. The written complaint should be addressed to the Centre Manager, who will normally be the person investigating the complaint. The Centre Manager will let you know within 3 working days who will deal with your complaint. If the complaint is about the Centre Manager, it will be investigated by a member of WOCA's Board of Trustees. If the complaint is about the Board of Trustees as a whole, it will be investigated by an independent person nominated by the Board, but outside of its organisational structure.

The Centre Manager must report the complaint to the designated Safeguarding Officer immediately, giving details of the circumstances. If the designated Safeguarding Officer is unavailable (or is the person against whom a complaint has been made) the Chair or in their absence Vice Chair of the Management Committee must be informed and they will ensure that the designated Safeguarding Officer is informed.

If any of the above (Chair, Vice Chair, Manager or the designated Safeguarding Officer) is the person against whom a complaint has been made they will be excluded from the processing of the complaint.

Investigation

The person nominated to deal with your complaint will gain an initial account of what has occurred from all relevant parties, including the person (if any) against whom the allegation has been made. If this is not possible, contact will be made by telephone. If appropriate, they may convene a meeting between you and the person(s) involved in the complaint.

The Manager or the Chair/Vice Chair will have the right to suspend from duty and/or the premises, any person who is the subject of the allegation until a full investigation has been made in line with WOCA's Disciplinary Procedures.

This action does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation of the complaint or imply in any way that the person suspended is responsible for, or is to blame for, any action leading up to the complaint. The purpose is to enable a full and proper investigation to be carried out in a professional and objective manner.

Decision

The person dealing with your complaint will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees on whether to uphold your complaint and on what action should be taken, if any. The Board of Trustees will then decide on the appropriate action to take. A written record of this will be given to you. The complaint will be dealt with within 2 weeks of the complaint being received by the person nominated to deal with it.

Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can appeal against it, in writing, within two weeks of receiving the written record. The appeal will be referred to an independent person nominated by the Board of Trustees, but outside of the organisational structure of WOCA. This will be a review of the process by which the decision was reached and the proposed action arising from the decision. If the process or decision was found not to be in line with WOCA policy then the complaint can be reinvestigated. A written response about the outcome of this review will be made within four weeks. No further appeal can be made.

Safeguarding Issues

In the event that issues of safeguarding are identified, it is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer to decide whether to inform Social Services, NHS Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) and/or the Safeguarding Unit of the local police, depending on the nature of the allegation. They may also have a legal duty to report the case to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

The Manager or his/her nominated deputy will ensure that the Chair of WOCA or in his/her absence the Vice-Chair, Secretary or Treasurer, is fully briefed. An agreed statement will be prepared for the purpose of accurate communication with external sources and for the protection of the legal position of all parties involved. The Manager or his/her nominated deputy will make a

full written report of the incident and the actions taken. This report will be stored securely following the procedures detailed in the Data Protection Policy.

Independent Persons

Independent persons carrying out investigations will either be:

- Colleagues from partner organisations which have similar values and principles to West Oxford Community Association
- Representatives of funding organisations, or organisations which contract with West Oxford Community Association

The independent person does not have the power to make decisions. Their role is to investigate the complaint, or the complaint process, and report their recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Publicising

People making formal complaints have the option to publish a summary of the complaint, the recommendations following the investigation, and the Board of Trustees' decisions in the light of the investigation.

Monitoring Complaints

All formal complaints received will be recorded in a Complaints Log.

New entries in the Complaints Log will be read out at Trustee Meetings as a matter of record. Any necessary action will then be confirmed or set in motion.