Selsey Community Forum
Complaints Policy

Policy Statement

Selsey Community Forum is committed to providing all our stakeholders with the highest standard of service and complaints will be treated very seriously. Complaints received from external individuals or organisations will be handled fairly, sensitively and as promptly as reasonably practicable.

Our policy is to

- To provide a fair complaints procedure that is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure the staff, volunteers and Trustees know what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and promptly.
- To make sure that complaints are addressed and that relationships are repaired.
- To ensure that complaints are monitored in order to improve our services.
- To maintain a Complaints Log and report to Trustees on any complaints received.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an act, omission, decision, or a service of Selsey Community Forum, whether it is justified or not. This may result from the action of a staff member, volunteer or Trustee or from an activity or programme of work in which we are involved.

Complaints may come from any individual or organisation that has been in contact with Selsey Community Forum and/or our services. A complaint may be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing, or via social media.

This Policy does not normally apply to complaints raised by employees about their employment, which should be addressed under Selsey Community Forum's Grievance Policy. Whistleblowing concerns should be raised under the Whistleblowing Policy where appropriate.

Confidentiality

Information relating to a complaint will be handled sensitively and in accordance with applicable data protection legislation, Selsey Community Forum's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice. Information will only be shared with individuals who have a legitimate need to know. Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the Charity's applicable retention arrangements.

Data Protection Complaints

Where a complaint concerns the way Selsey Community Forum has collected, used, stored, shared or otherwise handled personal information, it will also be managed in accordance with the Charity's data protection complaints process and applicable statutory requirements.

Complaints Procedure

We may receive a complaint by phone, email or post as well as through other channels, such as social media.

The Selsey Community Forum representative who receives a complaint will:

- Write down the facts of the complaint.
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number.
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Selsey Community Forum, for example, a beneficiary, volunteer or partner organisation.
- Advise the complainant of our complaints procedure.
- Advise the complainant of what will happen next and how long it will take.
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by email or by post so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint may be resolved quickly by the person or team responsible for the matter complained about. However, where the complaint concerns that individual personally, or where there may be a conflict of interest, the complaint should be referred to another appropriate manager, project lead or Trustee. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it quickly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Regardless of whether the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the appropriate manager or project lead within two working days. On receiving the complaint, they will record it in the Complaints Logbook. If it has not already been resolved, they will investigate the complaint and take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given the opportunity to respond. The appropriate manager or project lead will acknowledge complaints within four working days. The acknowledgement will say who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant may expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure will be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 10 working days. If this is not possible because an investigation has not been completed, a progress report will be sent to the complainant with an indication of when they may expect to receive a full reply. Regardless of whether the complaint is found to be valid or not, the reply to the complainant will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint be reviewed by the Board of Trustees. At this stage, the complainant should forward their complaint to the Chair of the Trustees. The Chair will acknowledge the request within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement will say who will deal with the case and when the complainant may expect a reply.

The Stage Two review should, wherever reasonably practicable, be carried out by the Chair of Trustees or another Trustee who has not previously been involved in the complaint and who has no conflict of interest. This will involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One will be kept informed of developments. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because the review has not been fully completed, a progress report will be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
Regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Trustees decide it is appropriate to obtain external assistance to resolve the issue.

External Escalation

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied after Selsey Community Forum's internal procedure has been completed, they may be able to raise the matter with an appropriate external body depending on the nature of the complaint.

The Charity Commission may consider serious concerns about a Charity, for example where there are concerns about serious misconduct or mismanagement, harm to beneficiaries or others, misuse of charitable funds or other significant regulatory issues. It does not act as a general complaints or appeals service for individual service complaints.

Complaints relating to fundraising, advertising, data protection or other regulated matters may fall within the remit of another appropriate regulator.

How to Make a Complaint

When making a complaint to Selsey Community Forum, please describe the issue you are complaining about with as much detail as possible. Please include dates and times as well as the names of any representatives you were in contact with. Please also provide copies of any relevant documentation if appropriate. Please state how you believe Selsey Community Forum might address the complaint, if possible. Please provide your name and contact details wherever possible so that we can respond to you and seek further information if needed. Anonymous complaints may still be considered where sufficient information is provided to allow the concern to be assessed, although it may not be possible to provide a response or investigate fully.

Written complaints can be emailed: mail@selseycommunityforum.uk
Alternatively, they can be posted to: Selsey Care Shop, 121 High Street, Selsey, PO20 0QB
To make a verbal complaint, please call 01243 201616

Other Matters

An appropriate written record will be maintained of complaints received, action taken and the outcome. Complaint records will be retained securely in accordance with Selsey Community Forum's Data Protection Policy and applicable retention arrangements. Any complaints related to a safeguarding issue are to be dealt with in accordance with Selsey Community Forum's Adult Safeguarding Policy or Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy as appropriate. All staff and volunteers are to be provided with appropriate induction training.

This Policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there is a significant change in legislation, regulatory guidance, organisational arrangements or complaint-handling requirements.

Version Control

Version Number	Date of Update	Amendments
1.0	October 2025	Policy reviewed
2.0	October 2026	Reviewed and updated in line with current guidance