

Chapter One: Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

Chapter One strives for excellence in all that we do and is committed to providing a high-quality service to all people that we work with, including the children we support, our partners, volunteers and supporters. We recognise that there will be times when we do not meet the standards that we set for ourselves. When this happens, we want to hear about our mistakes so that we can do our utmost to put things right and to learn and improve for the future.

The following policy details how we will approach any complaints made about us. **This policy only relates to complaints from external individuals and organisations.** To raise any concerns of wrongdoing, including malpractice and illegal acts, staff should refer to Chapter One's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

Overall responsibility for this policy lies with Chapter One's Board of Trustees, delegated to the CEO and senior leadership team. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as required.

2. Definition of a complaint and where complaints come from

A complaint, for the purpose of this policy, is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction from a non-staff member about any aspect of Chapter One, whether it is found to be justified or not. This policy covers complaints by: the children we support, parents, teachers, our partners, volunteers, supporters and members of the public.

3. Making a complaint to Chapter One

- Complaints must be made in writing and can be sent by post or email. Please include your name, address and contact telephone number in your correspondence so that we can respond to you. Complaints should be sent to: Emma Bell, CEO, Chapter One, 4 Torriano Cottages, Torriano Avenue, London, NW5 2TA, or emailed to emma@chapterone.org
- Complaints should be made as soon as possible and within three months to enable us to investigate as effectively as possible.

4. What you can expect from Chapter One

- Everyone who makes a complaint will be treated with courtesy and respect. We will listen to your concerns and suggestions, keep you informed of progress in a timely manner and direct you to external organisations should you be dissatisfied with our investigation and response.
- We will acknowledge your complaint within 48 hours of receipt and aim to respond to complaints within 15 working days. Where this is not possible, you will receive an update on progress and the date by which you can expect to receive a full response.
- Your complaint will be assessed by our CEO and investigated by a member of the senior leadership team who is independent from the issues raised. They may need to contact you for further information.

- Once the investigation has been completed, you will receive a final response detailing the complaint, the investigation process and findings and any improvements to be made.
- We are proactive in our approach to developing and improving our services and on occasion, a member of Chapter One staff, when dealing with any issues or concerns from an individual, may take the decision to escalate these. In the first instance, they will alert the CEO to the issues that they have been notified of and worked to resolve. It then may be decided that a more formal investigation is the best route to achieve a resolution and we will accordingly share our complaints policy with the individual concerned.
- Chapter One reserves the right, on rare occasions, to not respond to a complaint at all. These occasions include, but are not limited to: when a complaint is about something that Chapter One has no direct connection to; when complaints are of a persistent or a repetitive nature and we have previously conducted an investigation and issued a response in line with the process detailed above; and when a complainant's behaviour is abusive, prejudiced or offensive.

5. Escalating a complaint

- We very much hope that you will be satisfied with the investigation and response. However, if you feel that the matter has not been resolved, you can seek a further review by our CEO.
- If you remain dissatisfied, you can write to our Vice Chair of Trustees stating the steps already taken, details of the response received and why you remain dissatisfied. The Vice Chair will acknowledge your complaint within 48 hours and aim to give a final response within 15 working days. Complaints can be made by email to: Alexander Green, Vice Chair of Trustees at vicechair.chapterone@gmail.com
- If at this time the matter has not been resolved to your satisfaction, then you may wish to contact an external body.
- The Fundraising Regulator can investigate any complaints to do with fundraising. You can take your complaint to the Fundraising Regulator if you are unhappy with our response or you do not hear back from us within four weeks. Complaints should be made within two months of our final response. Full details can be found on the [Fundraising Regulator website](#).
- You can escalate any complaints of a serious nature to the [Charity Commission](#). Their website details the types of complaint that can be made and the process for doing so, via an online form.

6. Confidentiality and data protection

Whilst all complaint information will be handled sensitively, we cannot always guarantee to keep your identity confidential, as we may need to disclose your identity if required to do so by law. The CEO will log all complaints. All data will be processed and retained in accordance with our privacy/data protection policy.

7. Policy Exemptions

Sometimes, we might use a different policy to deal with your concerns. Our Whistleblowing policy sits alongside this policy and might be used if a complaint is raised by a volunteer which we feel meets the thresholds set by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

8. Other relevant policies

Other policies which may be relevant to this policy are:

- Privacy policy
- Donation Acceptance, Refusal and Returns Policy

- Recruitment of Ex-Offenders
- Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure