

# Comments, Compliments & Complaints Policy & Procedure

## 1. Introduction

This policy document aims to help you understand our procedure for dealing with your comments, compliments and complaints. We welcome your feedback on our service; your comments, suggestions and complaints can help us improve our services for everyone. We take complaints very seriously and we treat them as an opportunity to develop. We are grateful therefore to hear from people who are willing to take the time to help us improve and will always thank people who contact us with their feedback or to tell us about their problems, concerns or worries.

If you work for, or are involved with, a charity or voluntary group, making a complaint will not affect your chances of receiving a grant from us. Whilst we are happy to speak to you or meet with you informally to hear your feedback or concerns at any time, formal complaints must be made in writing and this procedure therefore deals with written communications only.

## 2. What can you complain about?

If you think we have failed to provide a satisfactory standard of service, please let us know. Your complaint might be about delays, discourtesy or mistakes, or you might have found our application process difficult to understand or unclear. We will consider and respond to complaints concerning:

- inappropriate behaviour by a GCF representatives;
- an inappropriate length of time taken to offer or refuse a grant;
- GCF not doing what it says it will do, either in general publicity or in correspondence with individuals or groups; and
- discrimination.

Our complaints procedure is not an appeals system against properly reached grant-making decisions. Inevitably some groups are disappointed because we have had to reject their application for funding. Please do not complain against a grant making decision unless you feel it was reached without proper attention to our grant making criteria. Other than in these special circumstances, GCF will *not* consider complaints concerning:

- the decision to offer a grant or to not offer a grant;
- the amount offered as a grant;
- changes in GCF's policies; or
- the activities of grant holders.

We also cannot promise to respond to complaints not directly relating to something we have done – we talk more about this in Section 8.

## 3. How can you contact us to give us your feedback or to complain?

In this section we give you options as to how you may contact us.

**Who can you speak or write to?** If you are comfortable doing so, it is very likely that any issues you have can be satisfactorily resolved by talking informally, and as soon as possible after the problem arises, directly to the person with whom you have been most involved at GCF, or, if you would prefer, with our Chief Executive. To make a formal complaint however, you will need to do this in writing using one of the methods suggested below.

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If your concern relates to the conduct of a member of our staff, then please contact the Chief Executive. If your concern relates to the conduct of the Chief Executive or of one of GCF's Trustees, then please make contact with the Chair of Trustees. If you have a complaint concerning the Chair of Trustees, then please make contact with the President of GCF. Contact details are given below.

**How can you contact us?** You may:

*email us.*

You can send an email to your usual Gloucestershire Community Foundation contact, or to one of the following, as appropriate:

The Chief Executive at [ceo@gloucestershirecf.org.uk](mailto:ceo@gloucestershirecf.org.uk)

the Chair of Trustees at [chair@gloucestershirecf.org.uk](mailto:chair@gloucestershirecf.org.uk)

*write to us at:*

Gloucestershire Community Foundation  
The Manor  
Boddington  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire GL510TJ

### 4. Help us to put things right

However you choose to make contact:

- please include your name, address and a contact telephone number with your email or letter, so that we can get back in touch with you easily.
- It is easier to put things right if you are clear about why you are not satisfied and what action you would like us to take. You may wish to use the form at the end of this procedure document to make your statement, or use it as checklist to help you decide what you want to say to us.
- Please let us know your concerns as soon as possible after the event or circumstances you wish to complain about have occurred. It is hard to deal fairly and accurately with a complaint made a long time after the problem occurred.

### 5. What happens to your comment, compliment or complaint?

Your written communications with us will be dealt with promptly. Whilst feedback and compliments may not require further response, we will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within 5 working days of receipt. GCF maintains a register of written compliments, comments and complaints, and your communication will be logged, and tracked on this register, to ensure we are dealing with it appropriately, and so that we have a means of reviewing and learning from the exchange.

In most cases, you will receive a full written reply to your complaint within 21 days. Usually this will be from the Chief Executive, other than in case of complaints directed to the Chair of Trustees or President, when the response will come directly from the person to whom the complaint was directed. If we cannot give you a full reply within 21 days, we will write to tell you why and let you know what we are doing to deal with your complaint. If the complaint is complex, we aim to let you have a full reply within two months.

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If you are not satisfied with our reply to your complaint, you can ask the Board of Trustees to review it as described in Section 6 below. They can only look at complaints that have been considered first by the people named above.

### **6. What happens if you are unhappy with how we have addressed your complaint?**

Please give us sufficient time to enable any agreed actions in response to your complaint to be implemented. If after this time you do not feel your complaint has been adequately addressed, you may write to the Chair of Trustees (or President if your complaint concerns the Chair), requesting a review. The Chair, or President as the case may be, will then take appropriate action and will aim to respond within 25 working days of the request for review. This response will be our last on the matter, and we will not enter into any further correspondence on the subject of the complaint once you have received it.

### **7. What happens to your compliment, comment or complaint once it has been dealt with?**

Our register of written compliments, comments or complaints received will be circulated to GCF's Board of Trustees before each of its meetings. The Board will look to use the information we have learned from your communications with us to improve our service and the way we operate.

Our register of written complaints made and the steps taken to put things right will remain a confidential record in GCF's offices. To process your complaint we will hold personal data about you, and will hold this securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988, and only use it to help address the complaint. Your identity will only be made known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public. It may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances however, where relevant legislation applies or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

We will normally destroy complaints files in a secure manner 2 years after the complaint is closed.

### **8. Are there any situations where we won't respond to a complaint at all?**

Yes, but rarely. Situations where we might choose not to respond to a complaint at all include:

- When a complaint is about something that GCF has no direct connection to. We may choose to reply to clear our name if appropriate, or to suggest another organisation who may be better placed to assist with your concern, but we are not obliged to;
- When a complaint is made about an organisation to whom GCF has made a grant. Depending on the nature of the complaint, GCF may use the information to inform its internal grant monitoring processes. We may also decide to pass information on to other public bodies such as the police or the Charity Commission in particular instances – or recommend that you do so. We are not obliged to do any of these things however;
- When someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that we have already responded to. We will always inform you of our decision to stop responding in this instance;
- If a complainant is harassing a staff member;
- Where a complaint is incoherent or illegible;

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- Where a complaint has been sent to us and other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email. In this instance we will choose whether to reply or not;
- Where a complaint has been made anonymously. In this situation we will however investigate the complaint and use the information to improve in any way that we can.

*You are not obliged to use the form on the next page to make a complaint, but may find it helpful to do so, or to use its questions as a checklist for formulating your complaint to us.*

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### Complaints Form:

Date:

Name:

Address:

Reference Number, if appropriate:

Has your organisation applied for or received a grant from us?

Yes ..... No.....

Tell us about your complaint, clearly outlining:

1. Why you are not satisfied.
2. What you would like us to do to put things right.
3. Who did you deal with from Gloucestershire Community Foundation?
4. Have you tried to resolve your complaint by contacting us before?

Yes.....

No.....

If "yes", when?

5. Can you suggest improvements in our methods that would overcome the problem(s) you have identified?
6. Would you like to add any other comments?

Please return this form to your usual contact at GCF, or to the Chair of Trustees, Gloucestershire Community Foundation, The Manor, Boddington, Cheltenham, Glos GL51 0TJ