

Strongbones Children's Charitable Trust

Complaints Policy and Procedure

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Strongbones Children's Charitable Trust welcomes feedback and uses it to improve and shape the services we provide. While we strive to maintain the highest standards, we recognise that there may be occasions where expectations are not met.

1.2 We are committed to handling all complaints sensitively, fairly, and effectively. Every complaint will be taken seriously and responded to in a thorough, accurate, and timely manner.

1.3 This policy supports our commitment to safeguarding children and young adults, ensuring that all concerns are addressed appropriately and that our conduct maintains public confidence.

1.4 Effective complaint handling is essential to maintaining positive relationships with the children, families, supporters, and communities we serve.

2.0 Purpose

2.1 This policy provides clear guidance for staff and volunteers on how to manage complaints received from children, families, and external parties.

2.2 The aims of this policy is to:

- Improve service quality through learning from complaints and concerns
 - Ensure complaints are handled consistently, transparently, and fairly
 - Strengthen accountability and continuous improvement
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3.0 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all trustees, staff, and volunteers.

3.2 It covers complaints from children, families, members of the public, and partner organisations.

3.3 Complaints may relate to:

- The services we provide

- The conduct of staff, volunteers, or representatives of Strongbones
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4.0 Definitions

4.1 A complaint is defined as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction about something Strongbones, or someone acting on its behalf, has done, whether justified or not.”

4.2 Complainant: The individual raising the complaint.

4.3 Complaints Procedure: The internal process used to manage and resolve complaints.

4.4 Criticism may not always constitute a complaint; however, if a concern is identified as a complaint by the individual, it will be handled accordingly.

4.5 Examples of issues that will always be treated as complaints include:

- Inappropriate fundraising practices
 - Poor service delivery or misconduct
 - Financial loss or misuse of funds
 - Harm or risk to children or vulnerable individuals
 - Breaches of policy, law, or regulations
 - Criminal activity involving the organisation
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5.0 How to Provide Feedback or Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made via:

- **Email:** trustees@strongbones.org.uk
- **Phone:** 01708 750599
- **Post:**
Strongbones Children’s Charitable Trust
Unit B9 Seedbed Centre
Davidson Way
Romford
Essex
RM7 0AZ

Anonymous complaints will be investigated; however, we may be unable to respond without contact details.

6.0 What Happens Next

6.1 We will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within **5 working days**.

6.2 We aim to resolve complaints within **28 days**. If additional time is required, we will inform you.

6.3 Due to confidentiality or legal constraints, we may not be able to share full details of the outcome but will confirm that appropriate action has been taken.

7.0 Managing Complaints

7.1 We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, ideally at the first point of contact.

7.2 If a complaint cannot be resolved immediately, it will be referred to the appropriate member of staff.

7.3 Complaints may be handled:

- **Informally**, where resolution is straightforward
- **Formally**, where issues are complex, serious, or unresolved

7.4 Complainants may request escalation to the formal process at any time.

7.5 All staff must:

- Recognise and respond appropriately to complaints
- Ensure timely escalation where necessary
- Maintain clear communication with the complainant

7.6 **Safeguarding:**

Any complaint involving a safeguarding concern will be managed in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

8.0 Formal Complaints Procedure

8.1 Formal complaints must be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) within one working day.

8.2 The CEO will acknowledge the complaint within five working days.

8.3 A full written response will be provided within **30 working days**, including:

- Findings and conclusions
- Actions taken
- Information on how to appeal

8.4 Where possible, we will offer the opportunity to discuss the complaint directly.

8.5 We will ensure sensitivity to individual needs, including accessibility, language, and support requirements.

9.0 When We May Not Respond

We may be unable to respond to a complaint where:

- The issue has already been fully addressed
 - It does not relate to Strongbones
 - Insufficient information is provided
 - The complainant cannot be identified
 - The complaint is abusive, threatening, or discriminatory
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10.0 Confidentiality

10.1 Information will be shared only where necessary and appropriate.

11.0 Escalation and External Bodies

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you may contact:

- **Charity Commission for England and Wales**
www.charitycommission.gov.uk
 - **Fundraising Regulator**
www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk
 - **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)**
www.ico.org.uk
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12.0 Whistleblowing

Staff, volunteers, or professionals concerned about safeguarding practices can contact:

- NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline
0800 028 0285
help@nspcc.org.uk
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13.0 Responsibilities

Strongbones will:

- Maintain a clear and accessible complaints process
 - Accept complaints verbally and in writing
 - Ensure staff and volunteers are trained in handling complaints
 - Resolve complaints promptly and fairly
 - Keep a central record of all complaints
 - Report complaint trends to the Board of Trustees
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14.0 Monitoring and Review

14.1 All complaints will be logged and reviewed to identify trends and improvements.

14.2 This policy will be reviewed every **three years**, or sooner if required.

15.0 Guidance for Making a Complaint

To help us respond effectively, please include:

- Your name
 - Your child's name (if applicable)
 - Date of the issue
 - Contact details
 - A clear description of the concern
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16.0 Further Support

You may wish to seek independent advice if:

- Your complaint remains unresolved
 - You feel progress is not being made
 - Internal processes have been exhausted
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Approved by: Strongbones Board of Trustees

Review Date: June 2029
