

Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1 CAS exists to support voluntary groups, volunteers and local communities and is accountable to its trustees, funders, Charity Commission and partners. We aim to provide the best possible advice, support and services to voluntary organisations and individuals. However we recognise that from time to time, an individual or organisation may feel dissatisfied with the support and service(s) they have received or may wish to raise a general matter of concern. CAS takes such concerns seriously and we will approach all complaints in a responsible, fair and consistent manner. We will take on board any learning required which could lead to amendment of our practices, approaches and policies. We also aim to reach a resolution at the earliest stage possible.
- 1.2 This policy and procedure therefore sets out the arrangements which CAS has in place for the investigation and resolution of complaints, and for learning from these.

2. Complaints, Concerns and Compliments

- 2.1 It is important to establish the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will help reduce the likelihood of a concern developing into a formal complaint.
- 2.2 If you have any concerns about a service you have received from us please tell the officer or their line manager as soon as possible so we can quickly understand your concerns and try to put things right.
- 2.3 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, either written or spoken. A complaint can be made by an individual or a group and is about something CAS has direct control over for example:
- The services we provide
 - The standard or quality of our services
 - Our policies and procedures
 - The attitude or performance of our staff
 - Failure to comply with our legal obligations
- 2.4 CAS would also like to receive any compliments and thanks for the work we do. These will be acknowledged and should be forwarded to info@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk so that they can be tracked, and where indicated, acted upon.

3. Principles of CAS's complaints policy and procedure

- 3.1 The following principles are used :
- CAS recognises that compliments and complaints are an important part of customer feedback
 - The procedure is accessible to everyone
 - Concerns and complaints are dealt with efficiently and are properly investigated
 - Complainants receive a timely and appropriate response, identifying the outcome of any investigation, wherever possible
 - Action is taken where necessary in the light of the outcome of the complaint
 - Learning from complaints will be used to improve CAS's services

- If the complainant is not happy with the result of the response to the complaint, they will have the right to appeal
- 3.2 In line with these, CAS will:
- Provide a thorough explanation
 - Accept shortcomings and apologise where appropriate
 - Identify actions and reduce the risk of re-occurrence
4. **Who can make a complaint?**
- 4.1 This procedure is for individuals or organisations that have received a service from CAS, or have experienced any aspect of CAS's work.

CAS's Three stage complaints process

We have three stages to our complaints handling procedure. At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clarity and detail as possible, including providing any documents and correspondence you have received. If we do not have all the details required to deal with the complaint, we may contact you and ask you for further information.

5. **Stage One – Informal complaint or concern**
- In the first instance, complaints or matters of concern should be raised with the appropriate officer. If however you feel this is difficult or inappropriate then please speak to the officer's line manager or Senior Manager. This can be by phone, email, in person or by completing the CAS Complaints Form available on the CAS website.
- 5.1 Complainants should be reassured that their concern will be taken seriously and an apology and explanation will be offered as appropriate. The response should also outline any procedures that have been put in place to help reduce any reoccurrences.
- 5.2 Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of its receipt and a full outcome received, normally by email, within 10 working days from the date the complaint was originally received.
- 5.3 If the Complaint is about a line manager, then it should be raised with the appropriate Senior Manager.
- 5.4 There may be occasions when social media is used, e.g. facebook or twitter, to raise a concern or make a complaint. In these circumstance a response will be provide by the Head of Partnerships and External Relationships, who will liaise with the appropriate officer or line manager who has responsibility for that area of work. The aim will be to resolve the issue as quickly as possible, and minimise the likelihood of the concern being communicated more widely on social media.
6. **Stage Two - Formally registering a complaint**
- 6.1 In cases where the Stage 1 Informal process does not lead to a satisfactory outcome for the complainant or they would prefer their complaint to be formally investigated, then Stage Two of this procedure should be used.
- 6.2 A complaint can be made in writing, via email or through our complaints form on our website, and should outline the details of the complaint along with any documents or correspondence received to date about the matter.
- 6.3 Formal complaints can be emailed to hr@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk or sent via the post to Community Action Suffolk, Brightspace, 160 Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, IP2 0HH marking it confidential and for the attention of the Louise Bradshaw, HR manager.

- 6.4 If a complaint is about the Chief Executive then it should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees and marked as private and confidential and sent to the postal address above.
- 6.5 All complaints at this stage will be acknowledged within 5 working days and CAS will aim to resolve the complaint through a process of clarification, investigation and take into account the resolutions sought by the Complainant.
- 6.6 Complainants will usually receive a full response to their complaint within 10 working days from the date of the acknowledgement email/letter. The response will include the following information:
- Details of the investigation and what has been found
 - A decision about whether the complaint was upheld or not
 - Details of the changes CAS will put in place to help prevent a recurrence of the issue(s) which led to the complaint
 - The reason for the decision
 - The redress, if appropriate, which will be offered e.g. an apology
- 6.7 In a few cases we may not be able to send a full reply within 10 working days of acknowledgement, for example if your complaint is very complex. If this happens, we will inform the complainant of the reasons why state when we will be able to reply in full.

7. **Stage Three (Appeal)**

- 7.1 If a complainant is not satisfied with the response to their complaint, the final stage is to outline the reasons for dissatisfaction in writing or via email to the Chief Executive (or the Board of Trustees if it is about the Chief Executive). This should be done in writing within 7 days of receipt of the outcome of the Stage 2 decision.
- 7.2 The Chief Executive will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 5 working days. The Stage Two investigation report will be reviewed and a recommendation of one of the following actions will be made within 15 working days:
- Uphold the action taken by CAS at Stage Two
 - Make changes to the Stage Two recommendation/actions
- 7.3 The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome of stage three. The decision reached about this complaint will then be final and no further appeals will be possible.

Complaints monitoring, investigation and learning

8. **Recording complaints**

- 8.1 All Stage Two complaints will be recorded on the complaints register as soon as they are received. This will be held by HR and will include:
- The date the complaint was received
 - Contact details of the person making the complaint
 - Details of the complaint
 - Investigating officer
 - Dates of when the initial and final correspondence is due to be sent
 - Copies of all documentation, including complaint letter, investigation Report and any correspondence with the complainant
 - Details of the whether the complaint is upheld

9. **Investigating Complaints**

- 9.1 All investigations will seek to:
- Identify and understand the circumstances which led to the complaint being made

- The steps which could be taken to prevent a reoccurrence of any such circumstances
- Preserve the confidentiality of the complainant other than where strictly needed for the purposes of investigation
- Present the outcome clearly and logically in writing, addressing each aspect of the complaint
- To establish whether to uphold a complaint (in full or in part) or not

10. **Complaints Review and Reporting**

10.1 All Stage Two complaints will be reviewed by the Executive team on a quarterly basis. A summary of the complaints will be reported annually to the board of trustees.

10.2 The purpose of this monitoring is to:

- Ensure CAS's standards for complaints management are met
- Identify at an early stage key themes/trends
- Review any learning and ensure practice is changed where necessary to reflect this

11. **Incident management and Investigation**

11.1 Throughout the complaints process, the HR Manager will be responsible for identifying whether there is a need to register any aspect of the complaint as an incident, e.g. where a complaint originated from a policy not being followed. In such circumstances, it should also be recorded as an incident using the Incident Reporting policy and procedure.

12. **Disciplinary procedures**

12.1 The purpose of the complaints procedure is to identify where things may have gone wrong, not to apportion blame. However some complaints may identify information about serious matters which indicate the need for a disciplinary investigation. In such cases, CAS's Disciplinary policy and procedure would also apply and the relevant papers that have been gathered during the investigation of the complaint may be used to consider whether disciplinary action is required. A complaint may be investigated even if disciplinary action is being considered. However, the two procedures will remain separate.

12.2 CAS will not disclose details of any disciplinary procedures followed or action that has been taken as a result of the complaint to the complainant, bearing in mind the rights of staff to confidentiality.

13. **Complaints from staff**

13.1 Staff who have complaints about other staff or the organisations work should take forward their concerns using CAS's policies and procedures for either:

- Grievance
- Bullying and Harassment
- Raising a matter of concern (whistleblowing)

13.2 Staff may seek advice in the first instance from their line manager or HR.

Issue & revision history

Date	Author	Version	Details
29.4.2019	L Bradshaw	1	Re-written Complaints policy and procedure

Complaints Form

Please read our Complaints Policy and Procedure to learn more about how CAS resolves complaints

Your details

Name	
Email address	
Organisation (if applicable)	
Phone number	
Address	
Please provide details of any requirements we need to keep in mind when dealing with your complaint and communicating with you	

Details of the complaint

Project/ person/ service the complain is about	
Date of incident	
If you have already verbally spoken to the staff member regarding your complaint please provide their name	
Details of the incident	
Details of any action taken following the incident	
Please provide any further details you think may be relevant	