



complaints policy

Community Southwark is committed to providing the best possible service to the organisations and individuals with whom we work, and we try to listen to our members and our users. We acknowledge, however, that there will be occasions when people may not be happy with some aspect of our provision. This Policy exists to make it easier for you to tell us when you are unhappy, or indeed when you have any comment you wish to make about Community Southwark. All complaints will be taken seriously and we aim to treat you with respect and consideration throughout the complaints process.

What kind of circumstances may give rise to a complaint?

- You believe you have been treated unfairly.
- You feel that we have failed to provide information about Community Southwark or our services.
- You feel that we have failed to provide a key service.
- You feel you have experienced an unreasonable delay in receiving a service.
- You feel that a service provided has been inadequate.
- You believe that our staff have been rude or unhelpful.
- You disagree with a decision we have made or a policy we operate.

What should I do to complain informally or raise a concern?

You can make your complaint to the member of staff concerned, or to any line manager. Any staff member will be pleased to tell you who is the most appropriate person to approach. This may be done in person, or by telephone or email. We aim to listen to what you have to say, to apologise whenever necessary, and to try to agree a solution with you.

We will try to deal with your complaint to your satisfaction immediately; however, there will be occasions when this may not be possible. If there will be a delay in responding to your complaint you will be told, and we will reply as quickly as possible either verbally or in writing as you wish. If you remain dissatisfied with us or with our response you should use the formal procedure outlined below.

What should I do to make a formal complaint?

You may use the formal complaints procedure at any time: you do not have to complain informally first if you believe that your complaint is too serious for that approach.

Attached to this Policy you will find a basic form, which you may use to make your

complaint; if you would prefer, you may write a letter instead. In either case, you should feel free to obtain assistance with writing your complaint if you need it; such assistance could be given by a friend or family member, a Citizens Advice Bureau or Advocacy group or a similar organisation. You should then post or hand-deliver your complaint to Community Southwark, marking the envelope clearly “Private & Confidential, for the attention of the Chief Executive” (if your complaint involves the Chief Executive, you may address it to the Chair of Trustees).

What will happen after I complain?

Community Southwark will aim to acknowledge receipt of your formal complaint within three working days; this will be done by letter, so it is important that you provide us with your correct postal address. This letter will also tell you what steps will be taken to investigate your complaint: we will normally ask you to meet with us to discuss the problem (in which case you are welcome to be accompanied by a person of your choice from outside of Community Southwark), and we may allocate responsibility for this meeting and the subsequent investigation to the appropriate line manager.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, it will be passed immediately to the appropriate line manager; the Chief Executive will write to you to tell you that this has been done and to explain that our internal inquiry process has begun. We aim to resolve all complaints quickly, and to keep you informed throughout the process. You will receive a full written response usually within 28 days; if there will be any further delay, you will be informed. This letter will include information on what to do if you are still dissatisfied.

Will my complaint be confidential?

Your complaint may be seen by managers or Community Southwark Trustees, as part of the investigation process but we will make every effort to safeguard your privacy; your complaint will not become “public knowledge” unless you so wish. You should be aware, however, that if your complaint is specifically about a member of staff or a trustee at Community Southwark, it will be necessary for that person to be told that a complaint has been lodged against him/her, to allow the investigation to proceed.

What if I am still unhappy – can I appeal?

You can appeal if you are unhappy about any aspect of the formal procedure outlined above, including the final response. You cannot go directly to the appeal stage unless you have used the formal procedure. If you wish to appeal, you should complete the form and guidance, which will be attached to the letter sent to you after the formal procedure.

What will happen if I appeal?

You will receive written acknowledgement of your appeal usually within five working days, along with information as to when and how it will be dealt with. A panel (consisting of three trustees from the appropriate committee or directly from the Board of Trustees) will normally be formed to consider your appeal. You may attend this meeting (bringing a person of your choice from outside Community Southwark, if you wish to), or make written comments if you would prefer. Your appeal and the original complaint will be considered in detail, and you will receive a written response within 14 days of the hearing. Community Southwark will make every effort to comply with the decision or recommendations of the appeal panel.

What if I am still dissatisfied following an appeal?

The appeal stage is the final internal one as far as Community Southwark is concerned. If you remain unhappy, you are entitled to contact Southwark Community Engagement Department, our major funder (telephone number below), or your local councillor or MP. You are, of course, entitled to do this directly without using our complaints procedure at all, although obviously we would encourage you to tell us first and allow us to try to resolve matters if you are unhappy.

What should I do if I wish to praise Community Southwark, or just make a suggestion or comment about something?

Community Southwark welcomes all comments and suggestions, and tries to take account of these where possible when planning work, etc. Please write to us, telephone, email or fax, or use the Community Southwark evaluation forms when these are sent to voluntary and community organisations.

Useful Information

Community Southwark
11 Market Place
Bermondsey
London SE16 3UQ

Tel: 020 3848 6540

Email: info@communitysouthwark.org

Citizens Advice Bureau: 0844 499 4134
Southwark Council: 020 7525 5000

Complaint Form

Your Name

Your Address

Your Telephone Number

What is your complaint? (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Ideally, how would you like us to respond?

Signature

Date

Please return as directed on the Policy attached.