Groundwork Northern Ireland

Complaints Policy

Action	Updated by	Approved by Committee	Approved by Board	Review Date
Review	H Pollock	15 September 2020	24 November 2020	November 2023
Review	GAC	3 May 2022	14 June 2022	June 2025
Review	K Balmer	1st September 2026	29th September 2026	September 2029

Groundwork Northern Ireland

Complaints Policy

1. POLICY

A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction made by a member of the public, volunteer, partner, or another organisation regarding the standard of work, service, consultation, or behaviour provided by the organisation and/or its employees.

Complaints should normally be made within twelve months of the incident occurring or of the complainant becoming aware of the issue.

This policy provides a framework for addressing external complaints promptly and effectively by:

- Identifying the three stages of the formal complaints process.
- Outlining the procedures applicable at each stage.
- Providing guidance on the appropriate contact person at each stage of the complaint.

Staff must ensure that clients are aware that the organisation's Complaints Policy is available on the organisation's website and explain how the complaints procedure can be accessed if required. Any staff member receiving a complaint must follow and adhere to the organisation's procedure for handling external complaints.

Complaints may be submitted verbally, in writing, or through an advocate or representative. Alternative formats of this policy and procedure can be made available on request.

Where the complaint concerns the Head of Programmes & Partnerships, the complaint should be directed to the Chair. Where the complaint concerns the Chair, the complaint should be directed to the Vice Chair or an independent Board member.

Where a complaint relates to an event delivered by another organisation, this procedure will still be followed. The other organisation may be informed of the complaint and the steps being taken to address it. If the matter is not resolved through this process, the complainant may, where appropriate, refer the issue directly to the other organisation, whose decision will be final.

Complaints relating to the processing, handling, security, retention, or disclosure of personal data will be managed in accordance with this Complaints Policy and the organisation's Data Protection Policy. Such complaints will be investigated and responded to in line with applicable data protection legislation. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a data protection complaint, they have the right to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK's independent authority for upholding information rights. The ICO can be contacted at **www.ico.org.uk**..

All complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially. Information will only be shared with those who need it to investigate and resolve the complaint.

This Complaints Policy is intended to address concerns relating to the services, activities, conduct, or decisions of Groundwork Northern Ireland. The following matters are not normally dealt with under this policy and will instead be managed through the relevant alternative procedures: employee grievances, disciplinary matters, whistleblowing concerns, safeguarding allegations, anonymous complaints, vexatious or malicious complaints, requests under the Freedom of Information legislation, subject access requests and other data rights requests.

2. PROCEDURES FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT

Anyone who feels unhappy about the way in which the organisation has conducted any aspect of its business should directly contact the Senior Administrator on 028 9074 9494 or via email at info@groundworkni.co.uk

2.1. STAGE ONE

The complainant will either:

- complete the Complaint Form and pass to the Senior Administrator; or
- request a third party to complete the Complaint Form and return it to the Senior Administrator; or
- request the details of the complaint to be recorded on the Complaint Form by a member of the organisations staff.

See Appendix 1 for a copy of the Complaint Form.

The organisation will send an acknowledgement that the complaint has been received and is being investigated will be sent to the complainant within 5 working days of receipt.

All data protection complaints will be acknowledged within 30 days and handled without undue delay.

An Investigation Manager will be appointed to investigate the complaint being made and the organisation will send the outcome to the complainant in writing within 10 working days of receipt. Where timescales cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reason and revised timescale.

Unless the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further, the complaint will be considered to have been resolved, and a record will be retained on the Complaints File.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied, they may wish to consider Stage Two of the Complaints Procedure.

2.2. STAGE TWO

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome in Stage One, they should write to the Head of Programmes & Partnerships. The letter should explain why the complainant is still dissatisfied, what they would like to happen, and any other points they feel are relevant.

The organisation will send an acknowledgement that the complaint has been received and is being investigated will be sent to the complainant within 5 working days of receipt.

The Head of Programmes & Partnerships will work with the complainant and the Investigation Manager to resolve the complaint. There may be the need to communicate over the phone and in person where necessary during this process.

The organisation will send the outcome in writing within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint. Where timescales cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reason and revised timescale.

Unless the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further, the complaint will be considered to have been resolved, and a record will be made on the Complaints file.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied, they may wish to consider the Final Stage of the Complaints procedure.

2.3. FINAL STAGE

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome in Stage Two, they should write to the Chair of the organisation. The letter should explain why the complainant is still dissatisfied, what they would like to happen, and any other points they feel are relevant.

The organisation will send an acknowledgement that the complaint has been received and is being investigated will be sent within 5 working days of receipt.

The Chair will work with the complainant, the Head of Programmes & Partnerships and the Investigating Manager to resolve the complaint. There may be the need to communicate over the phone and in person where necessary during this process.

The organisation will send the decision in writing within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. Where timescales cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reason and revised timescale.

Once a complaint has been considered at stage 3, the organisations complaints process will be deemed complete.

Appendix One

Complaints Form

To proceed with a complaint please complete this form and return to the Senior Administrator. This form will enable the complaint to be dealt with appropriately.

SECTION 1: Complainant details	
Name	
Contact number	
E-mail address	
Address and postcode	
Please state how you would prefer us to contact you (for example by e-mail or telephone)	
Your requirements If our usual way of dealing with concerns and complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English is not your first language or you need to engage with us in a particular way, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you. The person who experienced a problem should normally fill in this form. However, if you are filling this form on behalf of someone else, please complete Section 2. Please note that before taking forward a complaint, we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned. If you would like assistance to complete this form, please call the Senior Administrator on 028 9074 9494.	
SECTION 2: To be completed if completing the form on behalf of someone else	
Name in full	
Contact number	
E-mail address	
Address and postcode	
Relationship to the complainant	

SECTION 3: Organisation details
Is your complaint on behalf of an organisation or group? **YES/NO** (please circle as appropriate) – ***if no, please skip to Section 4***

Name of organisation / group	
Position you hold	
Address of organisation / group	
Phone number of organisation / group	
E-mail address of organisation / group	
SECTION 4: Complaint details	
Names of Individuals involved, date, time and location of where the incident occurred:	
Please give details of your complaint, what did we do wrong or what did we fail to do. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary	
If you have already verbally spoken to the staff member regarding your complaint, please give the name of staff and date	

What do you think should be done to put things right?

Please note that in investigating your complaint, the organisation may require to provide any named persons with details of the complaint to give them a fair opportunity to respond.

Your signature:	
Print Name	
Date:	

Once completed, please return this form, marked **private and confidential**, to the Senior Administrator Groundwork Northern Ireland 63-75 Duncairn Gardens Belfast, BT15 2GB or via email to info@groundworkni.co.uk

We endeavour to acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 days of receipt.