

Policy – Complaints

Version 3

Version Control				
Version	Date	Content	Manager Approved	Board Approved
V1	August 2024	Replaces original complaints policy. Adds more detail.	G Phillips	M Howlett
V2	July 2025	—	G Phillips	M Howlett
V3	August 2026	Format update and additional clarity added; FOI information added.	G Phillips	M Howlett



There are three parts to this policy

1. Complaints raised by staff or volunteers
2. Complaints raised by parents/carers/young carers
3. Whistleblowing



Complaints – Position Statement

Cheshire Young Carers has a policy in place to ensure that complaints are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. It is the policy of Cheshire Young Carers to have a fair and open process for dealing with concerns raised and anybody directly affected covering any of the services offered by Cheshire Young Carers.

Who can make a complaint?

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Cheshire Young Carers about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’.

A complaint may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint’s procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, if they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with staff member or volunteer at the time of the event where a concern is identified. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Informal Resolution

Many complainants do not want to enter a formal complaints procedure. They simply want to have their questions answered, their concerns dealt with, or their opinion noted. Informal resolution may be as simple as the complainant having a conversation with the local team before making a formal complaint to discuss how a concern raised can be resolved. Local, informal resolution should always be attempted before engaging in the formal complaints policy.

What complaints are accepted?

We accept complaints about how you have been treated by Cheshire Young Carers or, if you are a parent or carer of a young person, how that young person has been treated by Cheshire Young Carers. We have a few basic rules for the acceptance of complaints:

- Complaints will only be accepted within three months of the date that the complainant reasonably knew enough facts to report the issue.
- If there's reasonable belief that a complaint is vexatious or malicious, then it won't be progressed.

Complaints broadly or substantively the same as a previous complaint raised under any Cheshire Young Carers policies will not be progressed.

Complaints raised by staff or volunteers

Complaints in relation to employees/volunteers will be handled by the relevant line manager and/or Director and, where appropriate, the Chief Executive or senior staff member in accordance with this policy and/or relevant employee policies

Complaints about volunteers or local matters:

Formal complaints should be made in writing (physically or digitally) wherever possible to the most appropriate volunteer line manager. If you do not know the name and / or contact details of who to raise the complaint to, please contact Cheshire Young Carers directly

What should the complaint include?

The complaint should include:

- Complainant's full name.
- Complainant's contact details.
- How the complainant would like to be contacted in relation to the complaint.
- Complainant's relationship to Cheshire Young Carers e.g. parent/guardian/supplier.
- A summary of the complaint and what they think went wrong, including dates and times or any reported incidents.
- Clear and concise statements of what they would like to be investigated.
- Details of any informal resolution that has been taken so far to try to resolve the issue.
- Details of what they would see as an acceptable outcome.
- Details of any formal concerns already raised in any part of Cheshire Young Carers under any of the policies.

Complaints raised by parents/carers/young carers

A parent, carer or young carer can raise a concern or several concerns under this policy which will always be taken seriously and handled in a sensitive manner.

A complaint can be raised by the parent or carer of a child (who is registered with Cheshire Young Carers) or a young carer that are directly affected by the concern being raised. If, for any reason, someone is unable to make the complaint themselves, a representative (such as a friend or family member) may make a complaint on their behalf. In this case, the representative should explain why the individual is unable to make the complaint themselves. If appropriate, we might need to contact the individual to confirm that they've consented to the representative acting on their behalf.

Complainants should be encouraged to provide their name and contact details as it makes it easier for us to fully investigate the complaint, verify information and update the complainant on the progress of the investigation. However, if a complainant withholds their identity, steps will be taken to investigate the complaint to the extent possible.

Complainants can ask to keep their identity confidential and specify any other aspects of the complaint that contain sensitive information. We will aim to keep such details confidential wherever practical, but no absolute assurance can be given to the complainant as there may be situations in which disclosure will be necessary or even legally required.

Complaints will only be accepted within three months of the date that the complainant reasonably knew enough facts to report the issue.

If there's reasonable belief that a complaint is vexatious or malicious, then it won't be progressed. A complaint is vexatious or malicious if it's possible to demonstrate its without basis and that it would tend to or is being made with an intention to cause worry, upset, annoyance or embarrassment

If several different complaints are raised, they could be classified under more than one of the Cheshire Young Carers policies, it may be decided to consider them all under the same policy or as one complaint at the discretion of Cheshire Young Carers. When concerns raised have engaged more than one Cheshire Young Carers policies, Cheshire Young Carers may consider pausing one or more aspects to effectively manage the concerns. This may apply to a variety of scenarios including where safeguarding concerns have been raised alongside a complaint, or where a Subject Access Request has been submitted alongside a complaint. Cheshire Young Carers has complete discretion to decide under which of its policies a concern should be considered and their decision in relation to this is final.

- Complainant's full name.
- Complainant's contact details.
- How the complainant would like to be contacted in relation to the complaint.
- Complainant's relationship to the Cheshire Young Carers e.g. parent/carers.

- A summary of the complaint and what they think went wrong, including dates and times or any reported incidents.
- Clear and concise statements of what they would like to be investigated.
- Details of any informal resolution that has been taken so far to try to resolve the issue.
- Details of what they would see as an acceptable outcome.
- Details of any formal concerns already raised in any part of Cheshire Young Carers under any of the policies.

If a complainant does not agree with the reason for their complaint not being progressed, they are entitled to one appeal in accordance with this policy.

Who should complaints be made to?

Complaints received will be passed to the most appropriate manager for resolution. The appropriate manager can then decide whether they'll manage the complaint themselves or delegate to one of their deputies or assistants to manage the complaint.

If the appropriate manager, their deputies or assistants are unable to investigate the complaint for any reason including a conflict of interest (see definition below), the complaint should be passed to the CEO or Chairman for them to progress the complaint.

Conflict of interest – A conflict of interest is when someone's judgement or actions are, or could be, affected by something unconnected with their role in Cheshire Young Carers. This includes any circumstances that affect, or could be seen to affect, someone's independence or impartiality.

The offices of the Patron, President do not deal with complaints, disagreements or disputes. Any correspondence received on these matters will be referred to the most appropriate and most local manager.

There is no process of 'escalation' of a complaint. The complainant's recourse is solely to a single appeal once the original complaint has been investigated and the outcome known as set out in this policy.

Complaints about staff not directly employed by Cheshire Young Carers should be dealt with in the most appropriate and most local level of Cheshire Young Carers in accordance with their relevant employment policies.

Submitting a complaint

Formal complaints should be made in writing (physically or digitally) wherever possible. If there's a reason why a complainant cannot make their complaint in writing, they can make it orally. The



person to whom they make their complaint should, for the sake of clarity, summarise the complaint in writing and ask the complainant to check it is an accurate record of the conversation.

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Cheshire Young Carers Northern Lights Business Park, Rossfield Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 3AW

Response to all complaints

Dealing with complaints informally

Many complainants don't want to enter a formal complaints procedure. They simply want to have their questions answered, their concerns dealt with, or their opinion noted. As a result, local, informal resolution should always be attempted before engaging the formal complaints policy.

It's important to recognise the point when a complaint reaches a stage at which it should be dealt with formally. We ask that complainants try an informal attempt at resolution wherever possible.

If a complaint is to be dealt with formally, the steps set out in the rest of this policy should be followed.

Formal Complaints

We handle complaints in a positive and proactive manner and expect resolutions and outcomes to contribute to a process of continuous improvement.

Please bear in mind that adults and volunteers have other calls on their time. It may therefore take a little longer to sort out your complaint, however you will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint with an acknowledgement of a formal complaint within seven days and regular updates (typically at least every 14 days).

The investigator may need to speak to you and several other people to fully understand your complaint and the circumstances surrounding it.

The manager will decide about the complaint and will inform you whether your complaint is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

Acknowledging a complaint

When a complaint has been received by the relevant manager, a standard acknowledgement confirming receipt should be sent within 7 days. Acknowledgement does not necessarily

mean the complaint has been accepted in accordance with the policy, it is simply a confirmation that the information sent by the complainant has been received.

Following the acknowledgement the appropriate manager will need to make the following decisions:

- Who will manage the complaint as set out in the 'Who should complaints be made to?' section above.
- If the complaint can be accepted based on what's set out in the 'What complaints are accepted under the Complaints Policy?' section above.
- If the complainant has other ongoing concerns raised through any of Cheshire Young Carers policies at any management level. If so, then the appropriate volunteer manager can decide to combine the complaints and appoint one volunteer manager, deputy or assistant to deal with all complaints as one.
- If the complaint is one of multiple concerns raised about the same issue or individual through any of the Cheshire Young Carers policies. If so, then the appropriate manager can decide to combine the complaints and appoint one volunteer manager, deputy or assistant to deal with all the concerns as one.

Once these decisions have been made the individual managing the complaint should communicate in writing (physically or digitally) the following points to the person raising the complaint:

- the decisions made
- a concise list of the areas to be investigated and a request for the complainant to confirm they are happy to proceed with an investigation into the complaint on this basis.
- detail about who will be contacting them regarding the complaint and how to contact them
- the timescales of this communication (must include as a minimum an update every 14 days)

Investigating a complaint

An investigation is primarily an information gathering exercise and should therefore:

- gather all the facts
- seek the views of those involved

The individual managing the complaint can nominate someone to investigate a complaint on their behalf and report back to them with the facts to be considered. Careful consideration should be given as to who is chosen to investigate a complaint and there should be no conflict of interest (see definition above) between the investigator and others involved in the complaint.

When speaking with those involved in a complaint, you should inform them how they're involved with the complaint and give them an opportunity to respond. It's at the discretion of the investigator to decide how much detail is appropriate to provide to the individual about the complaint which has been made. You should inform the individuals you contact that their responses may form part of the response to the complaint and record appropriate notes of your conversations.

The person investigating a complaint should detail the facts in writing and may make a recommendation to the individual managing the complaint as to the outcome of the complaint based on the facts available.

The individual managing the complaint should then decide on the outcome of the complaint based on the findings of the investigation and in accordance with and informed by Cheshire Young Carers policies. There may be circumstances where you're unable to determine the outcome of individual aspects of a complaint. However, the complaint should either be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, with recommendations on the actions to be taken based on this decision.

Responding to a complaint

Following the investigation, the complainant should be notified in writing (physical or digital) of the outcome of the investigation and any steps which will be taken because of the complaint.

All written responses should be given careful consideration before being sent. The response to the complainant should:

- clearly state if the complaint is to be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld and the reasons that led to this decision referencing, where possible, all the key issues raised by the complainant based on the findings of the investigation.
- identify recommendations that will be undertaken based on the outcome of the complaint in the spirit of continuous improvement.
- identify who the appropriate volunteer manager the complainant can appeal to if they're unhappy with the process undertaken or the outcome of the complaint and how they can be contacted.

It's also important to contact others who have been directly involved with the complaint and share with them the outcome and recommendations where appropriate.

If you are not satisfied

If you or those who are directly affected by the outcome of a complaint are not satisfied with the outcome of the original complaint or the process undertaken, there is a right for

appeal. Only one appeal is allowed per person directly affected by a complaint and if multiple appeals raise the same concerns they may be carried out as one appeal.

Any appeal must be received within 14 days of you, or those directly affected, being notified of the outcome of the original complaint.

Contact details of who to make an appeal will be contained within the complaint response and appeals must be directed to the most appropriate and most local volunteer manager at the next management level of Cheshire Young Carers. The appropriate volunteer manager can then decide whether they'll manage the appeal themselves or delegate to one of their deputies or assistants to manage the appeal.

Appeals

An appeal will be treated in the same way as an original complaint. The same process should be followed, and the same courtesies (especially in terms of communication) extended to all parties. Any appeal should clearly state the basis on which it's being made. An appeal will consider the process undertaken to handle the original complaint and the outcome of the original complaint. An appeal should be acknowledged in the same way a complaint is and following initial acknowledgement, the appropriate manager responsible for overseeing the appeal should send a further acknowledgement in the same manner as the complaint was handled.

DSAR (Data Subject Access Request)

Individuals involved with complaints may decide to make a Data Subject Access Request (DSAR) under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This is also known as a Subject Access Request (SAR).

If a DSAR is requested this may slow the progress of a complaint or appeal as it may provide more evidence or use resources to process the DSAR. If this is the case it should be clearly communicated with those involved with the complaint. In some cases, it may be necessary to pause the

complaint/appeal investigation until the outcome of the DSAR is provided to the requestor and any reasonable time given so they can decide on how to proceed with the complaint/appeal.

Cheshire Young Carers will make every endeavour to maintain accurate and complete records relating to complaints and appeals, in accordance with data retention policies in the event they are required later. As a rule, written communication containing personal information may be disclosable where a DSAR is received. However, all communication relating to a complaint or appeal should be securely stored together in one place for completeness of records and ease of reference.



It should be noted that Cheshire Young Carers is a charity and therefore is usually not subject to DSARs, although we will always try to provide as much clarity as possible for any issue raised.

What appeals are accepted?

If a complainant or those who are directly affected by the outcome of a complaint are not satisfied with the outcome of the original complaint or the process undertaken, there is a right for appeal. Only one appeal is allowed per person directly affected by a complaint and if multiple appeals raise the same concerns they may be carried out as one appeal.

Any appeal must be received within 14 days of the complainant, or those directly affected, being notified of the outcome of the original complaint.

Who should appeals be made to?

Appeals must be directed to the most appropriate manager at the next management level of Cheshire Young Carers (this would normally be the CEO or Chairman). The appropriate manager can then decide whether they'll manage the appeal themselves or delegate to one of their deputies or assistants to manage the appeal.

If the appropriate manager, their deputies or assistants are unable to investigate the complaint for any reason including a conflict of interest (see definition above), the complaint should be passed to the Chairman.

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Anti-Bullying and Whistleblowing

Cheshire Young Carers acknowledges that it can be a difficult decision to report a concern of bullying and/or harassment about someone known to you. However, it's important that action is taken promptly to prevent the situation deteriorating.

The [Whistleblowing policy] (<https://www.scouts.org.uk/about-us/policy/whistleblowing/>) is for all staff and volunteers who have a serious concern about a breach of our standards or conduct. This policy makes sure that if a volunteer has a serious concern, they know how to raise it as soon as possible. The matter will be comprehensively investigated, and the appropriate action taken.