

OPTIMI

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Optimi aims to provide all those accessing our website and content with the best possible service at all times. However, we recognise that from time to time things can go wrong and there may be occasions when users feel that the quality or level of service provided falls short of what they could reasonably expect. We would hope and expect to resolve any problems or complaints informally and as quickly as possible. In the first instance we would expect any complaints to be raised directly with the person concerned, if known, or with Optimi through our contact email admin@optimi.org.uk. The more formal procedure outlined below is intended for use where informal communication has not resolved the complaint. Optimi recognises the importance of operating a complaints system that is effective, fair and accessible to all. This is in line with the Charity Commission's view that: 'an effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships with the people on whom the charity depends.' Optimi regards complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance, where appropriate, to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our **policy on complaints** is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at Optimi knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether ultimately found to be justified or not, about any aspect of Optimi's work. Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has had dealings with, or has a legitimate interest in, Optimi.

Confidentiality

All information provided in connection with a complaint will be handled sensitively. Information will only be shared with those who need to know and in line with relevant data protection requirements.

Submitting Complaints

Complaints are best made in writing with supporting evidence so that the details are recorded in the complainant's own words and we can more easily review the facts and supporting evidence. These complaints can be sent by email to:

admin@optimi.org.uk

or to our registered address:

Optimi c/o Azets, 5-7 Beatrice Street, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY11 1QE, UK

Ordinarily we will deal with non-written complaints only where the complainant has legitimate reasons that prevent them from submitting a written complaint. Once we have received the complaint in writing, we will contact the complainant to provide details of the complaints procedure. In some cases, we may want to clarify with the individual that he/she has made a complaint rather than provided feedback.

Handling and Resolving Complaints

We expect that complainants will engage with our procedure as set out below.

In many cases a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. If we are unable to resolve a complaint in this way, the Chair of Trustees will contact the complainant within five working days to advise how we intend to proceed. The Chair of Trustees will record the complaint in the complaints log, will acknowledge the complaint and coordinate with the appropriate person at Optimi to investigate it and

to take appropriate action. It is Optimi's decision who handles the complaint. The acknowledgement to the complainant will say who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of the complaints procedure should be enclosed with the acknowledgement. If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond. If the complaint relates to the Chair of Trustees, the complaint will be referred to another Trustee for investigation. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will be sent to the complainant with an indication of when a full reply will be given. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. Please note that sometimes the detail of the complaint may need to be withheld to maintain confidentiality in particularly sensitive matters.

Complaints direct to the Charity Commission

In certain circumstances a complaint can be made direct to the Charity Commission. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission will be prepared to investigate can be found on their website at:

www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

The Commission does not, however, act as a complaints service for those complaints that are best dealt with by the charity direct. It assesses and identifies if there is a regulatory issue or other serious concern that requires its involvement. The Commission will normally refuse to take up an issue if it judges it not to be in the public interest to use its resources investigating or resolving it.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Chair of Trustees may vary the procedure in cases where the specific circumstances justify this. For example, a variation of the procedure may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest in a particular case.

Complaints outside of the scope of the policy We are committed to handling all complaints directly relating to the Optimi's work. There are incidents that fall outside of the policy which include, but are not limited to:

- Complaints that are being dealt with through a legal process
- Complaints that are more than 12 months old

Vexatious complaints

We define unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants as those complainants who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with Optimi, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints. The description 'unreasonably persistent' and 'vexatious' may apply separately or jointly to a particular complainant. If we believe we have exhausted the options in handling / resolving the complaint, we reserve the right to restrict how we deal with the complaint.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed, recorded and reported to the Trust Board annually to identify any trends, which may indicate a need to take further action.

Ownership of Policy and Frequency of Review

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Chair of Trustees, supported by the Trustees. This policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis.