

Complaints Policy



Document Owner Chief Executive Officer

Approval Date May 2025

Review Date May 2028

Approved By General Council

Document Family

<input type="checkbox"/> Staying Safe	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance
<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/> Programme
<input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Governance
<input type="checkbox"/> Staffing	<input type="checkbox"/> Communications

Applies To

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Volunteers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Groups & Districts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Centres & Campsites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contractors & Partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Projects & Events

Purpose

This complaints policy covers all parts of Woodcraft Folk, including local groups, Folk Office services, projects, residential centres and camps. This policy outlines how we will listen, learn and respond to concerns or complaints in a constructive and transparent way. It is designed to reflect the co-operative and voluntary nature of our organisation and to ensure that every voice is heard and valued.

Woodcraft Folk's Commitment

Woodcraft Folk members and staff strive to give all children and young people a positive experience, introducing them to our aims and principles through play, group work and outdoor adventures. In order to do this we seek to involve children and young people in planning, and actively listen to their suggestions, comments and feedback – this includes telling us when things go wrong.

As an organisation, when things do go wrong or we do not meet expectations we wish to explore how we can learn lessons and improve our practice. As such we welcome your opinions and suggestions – what works, what could be better and when you are dissatisfied.

Principles

The policy has been created to ensure that all concerns are:

- Dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively
- Handled in a consistent manner throughout our organisation, treating everyone involved with dignity and fairness
- Transparent – Processes will be clear and decisions explained with support available for individuals if needed
- Responded to with the aim of increasing satisfaction of children, young people, parents/carers, volunteers and other members
- Reviewed so that lessons learnt can be used in the planning and

- improvement of activities
- Dealt with in a timely manner, with the aim of resolving complaints promptly while ensuring thorough investigation

There are a number of ways in which you can have your say, including:

1. Talk directly to your Group Contact (you may wish to arrange a time to talk as the Group Contact's priority during group night will be to facilitate the programme and they may not have time to listen to and discuss your concerns)
2. Write to or email the District Co-ordinator (Each Woodcraft Folk group is part of a local District, and the Co-ordinator has oversight of all group activities). To find their contact details visit www.woodcraft.org.uk/where
3. Contact the national charity by calling 0207 358 6454 or emailing info@woodcraft.org.uk

Who can complain?

Everyone who comes into contact with Woodcraft Folk is welcome to offer constructive feedback, whether positive or negative. For example:

- Children and young people who attend groups
- Adults responsible for children and young people who attend groups
- Woodcraft Folk members/volunteers
- Individuals responsible for venues Woodcraft Folk groups use
- Individuals and groups staying at a Woodcraft Folk centre
- Members of the public who have witnessed inappropriate conduct or been affected by the behaviour of a Woodcraft Folk group, volunteer or staff member
- Funders, donors, partners or general supporters
- Woodcraft Folk staff

What can you complain about?

Your complaint is likely to be unique to you and the nature of your engagement with Woodcraft Folk. The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances that might prompt you to contact Woodcraft Folk with an issue, though please remember you are also most welcome to offer positive feedback too!

- Dissatisfaction with the level of service you have received
- Failure to follow Woodcraft Folk's policies, procedures or guidance
- The behaviour or actions of individuals (including volunteers or staff)
- Decisions made by Woodcraft Folk groups, committees or the national body
- Belief that a criminal offence has been committed
- Belief that an activity is dangerous
- Bullying and harassment
- Feeling that an individual child's needs have not been met
- Feeling unfairly treated by a volunteer or staff member

- Concern about the conduct of group members
- Concern about the conduct of an adult e.g. excessive discipline, suspected grooming behaviour, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Complaint about conduct during a fundraising activity

When making a complaint

Complaints can be raised:

- Informally, by speaking to a group leader, volunteer, or local contact in the first instance. Many issues can be resolved quickly through discussion.
- Formally, by submitting a complaint in writing via info@woodcraft.org.uk

To help Woodcraft Folk respond to your complaint please:

1. Read this policy, and any procedure it may signpost you to given the nature of your complaint. If you need help please ring to discuss your complaint informally first.
2. Please include your name and contact details
3. Be specific about what it is you are complaining about
4. Suggest how you feel your complaint could be resolved
5. Be polite and respectful, and we will do the same to you.

Woodcraft Folk members are volunteers, and as such it might take us longer to respond than you would expect. Once your complaint has been received, we will keep you informed. This will include how the complaint will be dealt with and an indication of how long it will take.

How Complaints Are Handled

Once a formal complaint is received:

1. Acknowledgement: We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days.
2. If appropriate an investigation panel will be established: A designated person (e.g. District Officer, Trustee or staff member not involved in the issue) will investigate. This may involve speaking to those involved and reviewing relevant information. In all safeguarding and child protection issues this will be the Safeguarding Team.
3. Outcome: A written response will be provided within 28 working days, outlining:
 - What was found
 - Any actions being taken
 - How we will prevent recurrence, if relevant

If additional time is needed, we will inform you and explain why.

Fundraising Complaints

Woodcraft Folk will keep records of complaints concerning fundraising in accordance with the Code of Fundraising Practice. We will retain records relating to a complaint for at least 24 months from the date on which the complaint was made, except where data protection law requires that the information be put beyond use earlier than this. Woodcraft Folk will make records of complaints available for inspection by the Fundraising Regulator on request, and records will include details of the complaint, the date it was received, details of any investigation we may have undertaken and a copy of all communications regarding the issue.

Appeals Process

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you have the right to appeal within 14 days of receiving the response. Your appeal should:

- Be made in writing
- Explain why you are dissatisfied
- Indicate what outcome you are seeking

An appeal will be reviewed by a more senior or independent panel (e.g. a senior staff member or committee of Trustees). They will:

- Review the original investigation and findings
- Consider any new information provided
- Issue a final decision within 28 working days of receiving the appeal. If additional time is needed, we will inform you and explain why.

Confidentiality and Support

All complaints will be handled with appropriate confidentiality, and information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis. Support will be made available to both the complainant and those involved in the complaint.

If You Remain Dissatisfied

If, after the appeal, you still feel your concerns have not been properly addressed, you can contact an external body (e.g. Charity Commission) if your concern relates to serious governance, safeguarding, or legal matters.

Woodcraft Folk is committed to learning from complaints and improving our practice. All complaints and outcomes will be logged and monitored, and anonymised reports may be shared with the Board to support ongoing reflection and development.

How will your complaint be dealt with?

Woodcraft Folk has many branches, and its services are diverse. To ensure your complaint is responded to appropriately Woodcraft Folk has a number of relevant procedures designed to find a resolution that is proportional to the concern raised.

The following table seeks to clarify how Woodcraft Folk will respond to your concern.

<i>Nature of concern</i>	<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Who to contact</i>	<i>Escalation</i>
Concerned about the suitability of an adult to work or volunteer with children and young people	Child Protection Procedures	Local Safeguarding Officer	Lead Safeguarding Officer safeguarding@woodcraft.org.uk
Financial malpractice or misconduct or fraud, failure to comply with a legal obligation or Statutes, dangers to Health & Safety or the environment, criminal activity, Improper conduct or unethical behaviour, or attempts to conceal any of these	Whistle-Blowing Procedures	Chief Executive	Chief Executive , Chair of Trustees and/or Charity Commission if dissatisfied with the outcome of any internal investigation
Unethical fundraising activities or breach of Code of Fundraising Practise	Whistle-Blowing Procedures	Fundraiser	Chief Executive , Chair of Trustees and/or Fundraising Regulator if dissatisfied with the outcome of internal investigation

<i>Nature of concern</i>	<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Who to contact</i>	<i>Escalation</i>
Improper conduct or a breach of the Code of Fundraising Practice by a fundraiser	Grievance Procedure	Chief Executive or Chair of the Trustee Board	Chief Executive , Chair of Trustees and/or Fundraising Regulator if dissatisfied the outcome of internal investigation
Failure to meet a child's needs	Complaints Policy	Group Contact www.woodcraft.org.uk/where	District Contact or Local Safeguarding Officer
Criminal Offence (other than those referred to as part of the Whistle Blowing Procedures)	Staff Disciplinary or Volunteer Disciplinary Procedures	District Contact for volunteers, staff line manager for employees	Chief Executive , Chair of Trustees and/or Police
Bullying between children	Managing Behaviour Guidance	Group Contact	Local Safeguarding Officer
Inappropriate behaviour by an individual under 18 years	Managing Behaviour Guidance	Group Contact	Local Safeguarding Officer
Inappropriate behaviour by an individual over 18 years	Staff Disciplinary or Volunteer Disciplinary Procedures	District Contact for volunteers, staff line manager for employees	Chief Executive , Chair of Trustees

<i>Nature of concern</i>	<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Who to contact</i>	<i>Escalation</i>
Advantage taken of a vulnerable person	Supporting Vulnerable Persons Policy and Grievance Procedure	Group contact or national safeguarding team	Chief Executive , Chair of Trustees
Conduct of a staff member	Staff Disciplinary Procedures	Line Manager	Staffing Committee
Bullying of an adult by another adult	Staff Disciplinary or Volunteer Disciplinary Procedures	District Contact for volunteers, staff line manager for employees	Chief Executive
Accident or injury	Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy	Group Contact	District Contact or Local Safeguarding Officer

See Also

Policies

- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Whistleblowing Policy](#)
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy

Procedures

- Grievance Procedure
- Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- Volunteer Disciplinary Procedure
- Code of Behaviour