

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Working on behalf of and/or engaging with The Playwork Foundation should be a rewarding and enjoyable experience. We try to get things right but occasionally we fall short of expectations. We therefore welcome comments on how we can improve. However, if something is not resolved satisfactorily, it may be necessary to make a formal complaint.

Your complaint will be:

- Dealt with as quickly as possible
- Handled fairly and politely
- Investigated fully

How do I complain?

Complaints can be received:

- By phone
- In person
- By email
- On behalf of someone else

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Stage One: First Information Complaint

You should, in the first instance, make your concerns known to the Secretary (Ali Wood). If the complaint refers to the Secretary or it would be otherwise inappropriate to report the concern to them, your complaint should be addressed to the Chair (Siôn Edwards) or any Trustee of The Playwork Foundation.

In the first instance, it will be considered whether your complaint can be addressed or resolved informally. If this is not possible, or you are not satisfied, the complaint can proceed to Stage Two.

Stage Two: Formal Complaint

If you wish to proceed, you will need to put your complaint by email to the Secretary of The Playwork Foundation via complaints@playwork.foundation. If the complaint involves the

Secretary, you may address it directly to the Chair of The Playwork Foundation or any Trustee of The Playwork Foundation.

Your complaint should be acknowledged by email, letter or phone within 5 working days, and we will aim to resolve the complaint within 14 working days. If this target of 14 days cannot be met, you will be informed of the delay, the reason for the delay, and the new target for responding.

If you have accessibility needs and/or communication preferences that will help us ensure your complaint is handled correctly, please detail this as soon as possible.

Stage Three: My Complaint Has Been Investigated, but I Am Still Not Satisfied

At this stage, the complaint will be the sole matter of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Board of Trustees at which all parties relevant to the complaint, will be invited to provide testimony at specific parts of the meeting. Following any testimonies, the Board of Trustees will take a vote on potential resolutions and the resolution with a majority vote will be enacted – this decision will be final. You will receive an email or letter, detailing the outcome of this meeting, within 28 working days of the meeting.

If you are still unsatisfied, guidance is available on the Charity Commission for England and Wales website: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>.

Agreed and adopted for use by the Board of Trustees on 11/03/26.

ANNEX: Internal Investigation Procedure

To be read alongside the Complaints Policy and the Safeguarding Policy



This annex sets out how The Playwork Foundation will internally manage, investigate, and resolve complaints that progress beyond informal handling.

A note on **safeguarding**:

If any level of comment, complaint or concern involves a potential **risk of abuse, neglect, or harm**, or an **allegation that a person in a position of trust has behaved in a way that may pose a risk to children or adults at risk**, the Safeguarding Policy applies.

If safeguarding procedures are triggered, all matters exit the complaints process until the safeguarding response is complete.

A note on **conflicts of interest**:

Anyone receiving a comment or complaint must consider whether they are conflicted (see Conflicts of Interest Policy). As soon as the recipient becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest, the concern must be passed to a non-conflicted Trustee.

1. Stage One: Initial / Informal Complaints

Stage One aims to resolve concerns quickly and proportionately, without formal investigation unless required by law or other internal policies (see above).

1.1 The person receiving the concern should:

- listen without judgement
- gather a basic outline of the issue
- clarify what outcome the complainant is seeking

1.2 If appropriate, the recipient may:

- clarify any identifiable misunderstandings
- provide information
- offer an apology or consider other proportional resolutions

1.3 The recipient should create a brief record that includes information such as: date; name of recipient; summary of concern; safeguarding considerations; conflicts of interests; outcome. If appropriate, this should be filed with the Secretary. Consideration should be given to report the matter to the Board of Trustees and note it formally in the minutes.

1.4 If unresolved, the complainant should be invited to proceed to Stage Two.

2. Stage Two: Formal Complaints Handling

Stage Two begins when a written complaint is submitted to complaints@playwork.foundation.

The complaints@playwork.foundation inbox should only be monitored by the Secretary.

Where the Secretary is conflicted:

- complaints may be made by email to the Chair or any other trustee
- the Secretary must forward any emails received via complaints@playwork.foundation to the Chair or, if the Chair is also conflicted, any non-conflicted trustee as soon as they identify they are conflicted

2.1 Typically, the Secretary will receive the complaint and share it with the Chair, provided neither is conflicted.

If the Secretary is conflicted, the complaint should be sent directly to the Chair or any other non-conflicted Trustee. If the Chair is conflicted, the Secretary should share the complaint with any other non-conflicted Trustee. If both the Secretary and Chair are conflicted, any non-conflicted Trustee may receive and initially direct the handling of the complaint.

2.2 Once the complaint is held by two non-conflicted Trustees, those two Trustees together form the initial assessment group (IAG). Their role is to determine whether:

- the complaint can be resolved without an investigation
- an internal investigation is required
- external advice is needed
- the matter should be escalated to the full Board at this stage

If either Trustee believes the matter is too serious, too complex, or too sensitive for a two-Trustee assessment, they must refer the matter to the full Board (excluding conflicted Trustees).

If both Trustees agree that an investigation is required, they should recommend to the Board (or a quorum of non-conflicted Trustees) the appointment of an Investigating Lead. At this stage,

the Chair, Board and any Trustee who is subject to a complaint should be notified of the complaint to an appropriate level.

2.3 The Investigating Lead must:

- be a Trustee or be appointed by a quorum of non-conflicted Trustees
- not have a conflict of interest
- not have been involved in the concerns raised and/or events complained about
- be able to act impartially and maintain confidentiality

2.4 The Investigating Lead should define a proportionate scope, appropriate to the seriousness and complexity of the concern / complaint. This may include:

- what questions need to be answered
- what information or documentation is required and not required (i.e., outside of the scope of the investigation)
- who may need to be contacted / spoken to
- any safeguarding considerations
- any limitations (e.g., availability, access to information, time constraints)

The scope should be drafted into a Terms of Reference (ToR) accepted by the quorum of trustees who appointed the Investigating Lead. These ToR should also stipulate how evidence, information, findings and other outcomes of an investigation will be recorded.

NB: The investigation should remain proportionate - not all concerns or complaints will require interviews or extensive evidence-gathering.

2.5 Once the investigation is complete, the Investigating Lead should prepare a report that includes:

- the nature of the complaint
- the steps taken
- the information gathered
- any relevant policies considered
- findings of fact (not opinion)
- any recommendations for resolution (if included in the ToR)

This report should be shared with the non-conflicted Trustees or as otherwise outlined by the agreed ToR.

2.6 Those reviewing the report should consider and determine:

- whether the investigation has addressed the agreed scope
- whether the findings of fact are clear
- whether any safeguarding issues remain active
- whether further information is required

- what, if any, actions or resolutions are appropriate

If further information is required, the outstanding matters should be returned to the Investigating Lead and a further and / or final report issued. If there is disagreement in how outstanding matters are addressed, the following outcomes may be considered:

- ToRs are revised
- Relevant statutory bodies (e.g., Charity Commission, inspectorates, workforce councils) are consulted or deferred to
- External advice is sought
- External arbitration is sought
- Any other constitutionally-compliant remedy is sought by a quorum of Trustees

2.7 Those reviewing the final report should agree a Stage Two outcome, which may include:

- no further action
- an apology
- mediation
- training or guidance
- changes to internal processes
- revocation of membership and / or role within the CIO
- referral to safeguarding or statutory agencies

A non-conflicted Trustee should communicate the Stage Two outcome to the complainant, the subject of the complaint and the Board of Trustees in the timeframes outlined by the Complaints Policy.

3. Stage Three: Board-Level Review / Appeal Stage

Stage Three applies only when:

- the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage Two outcome; and,
- the complainant requests that the matter be reviewed by the Board in line with the Complaints Policy

It is not an automatic escalation from Stage Two.

3.1 If a complainant wishes to request a Stage Three review:

- the request should be sent to complaints@playwork.foundation (as per Stage 2)
- the request should be acknowledged in line with the Complaints Policy
- the request should be shared with the Chair, unless the Chair is conflicted

Two non-conflicted Trustees should confirm that the request meets the criteria for Stage Three as set out in the Complaints Policy.

If the request does not meet the criteria, the complainant should be informed that the Stage Two outcome stands.

3.2 The Board should identify a group of non-conflicted Trustees to conduct the Stage Three review. This may be:

- the full Board (excluding conflicted Trustees); or,
- a smaller group of non-conflicted Trustees or other delegated individuals with appropriate authority and /or experience.

3.3 Stage Three is a review, not a reinvestigation. The reviewing group should consider:

- whether the Stage Two process was followed appropriately
- whether the investigation was proportionate to the complaint
- whether the findings were reasonable based on the information available
- whether the Stage Two outcome was fair and proportionate
- whether any new, relevant information has emerged

The reviewing group may:

- uphold the Stage Two outcome
- amend the Stage Two outcome
- request limited clarification from the Investigating Lead
- request limited additional information if essential to fairness

They should not reopen the investigation unless there is a clear procedural or factual reason to do so.

3.4 The reviewing group should agree a Stage Three outcome, which may include:

- confirming the Stage Two outcome
- modifying the Stage Two outcome
- recommending changes to internal processes
- any other proportionate and constitutionally-compliant action

The decision should be made by majority vote of non-conflicted members of the reviewing group. The Stage Three decision is final within the charity's internal processes.

3.5 A non-conflicted Trustee should write to the complainant and any subject of a complaint in the timeframes outlined in the Complaints Policy, confirming:

- the Stage Three decision
- a brief explanation of the rationale
- any actions to be taken
- that this concludes the internal complaints process

The communication should remain factual and avoid unnecessary detail about internal deliberations.

4. General practice

4.1 For all stages of the complaints process, the following should be securely recorded in accordance with current GDPR legislation and data protection policies:

- the complaint
- any investigation Terms of Reference
- the investigation report(s)
- Stage Two and Stage Three decisions
- any conflicts of interest declared
- any safeguarding actions taken
- any communications with the complainant

4.2 Where appropriate, the Board may use findings from investigations and outcomes to:

- review policies
- identify areas of learning
- implement improvements
- consider training requirements
- communicate transparently to members and the public any outcomes
- uphold the reputation of playwork, playworkers and the CIO

4.3 Complainants should always be actively informed of their rights.

4.4 Where relevant, statutory agencies should be engaged at the earliest appropriate opportunity. Trustees must fulfil any duties to inform statutory agencies in accordance with the laws of England and Wales.