

1. Introduction

First Step Trust strives to ensure that the service it provides is delivered to the highest standard, both in its service delivery to funding partners and to its private customers through its social enterprise ventures.

However, circumstances may arise where an individual or organisation has a concern or complaint and wishes to bring this to our attention. We will take all reasonable steps to resolve the situation, in everyone's best interests.

NOTE – For trainees and programme participants please refer to Complaints and Appeals policy doc CORPCOMP001 and for staff please refer to the internal Complaints & Grievance process.

2. Aim Of Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure there is a robust reporting system in place for all comments, compliments and complaints and any received correspondence is acted on in a timely, appropriate and satisfactory manner.

3. Definitions

Compliment - An unsolicited expression of praise, thanks or satisfaction.

Comment - A proposal or a suggestion for change or improvement.

Complaint - An expression of dissatisfaction relating to the standard of service received by the organisation or relating to actions taken by the organisation whilst carrying out their duty.

4. Responsibilities

All members of staff have a responsibility to be aware of this policy and act accordingly.

Formal complaints will be handled by a nominated member of the senior leadership team.

Complaints involving the Chief Executive and/or members of the senior leadership team will be handled by the Chair of the Board of Trustees

5. Process

Compliments and Comments

Compliments and comments should be addressed to the either the individual involved or emailed to comms@firststeptrust.org.uk

Informal complaints

Any concerns should initially be raised with a member of our team at the time, as this enables us to respond and deal with an issue quickly. If unsure of who to contact, then use the email comms@firststeptrust.org.uk

We will seek to resolve this and meet any reasonable expectations the individual may have, ideally to their satisfaction:

Staff members are directed to obtain the following information from any complainant, where possible

- The complainant's name and contact details, unless he/she is unwilling to provide these.
- The nature of his/her concern.
- The circumstances surrounding the complaint, including when, where any action that was taken and the details of others who were present/involved.

If the complaint cannot be resolved in the first instance, they will be passed to the relevant senior staff members within the organisation who will then carry out appropriate investigations. They will

then communicate the outcome of the complaint promptly and clearly, explaining any actions taken or decisions made.

Formal Complaints

Where an individual wishes to make a formal complaint, they should be provided with the e-mail address of the nominated senior leadership team member responsible for complaints and/or our registered address. Correspondence should be marked private and confidential. Complainants should be provided with a copy of this policy by post or e-mail.

To help resolve the complaint as quickly and effectively as possible, the individual making the complaint should do so as soon as possible and should include in it:

- Name, organisation (if relevant), address (if relevant), telephone number and e-mail.
- If the complainant wishes to be contacted in a particular way, this should be relayed at the earliest opportunity.
- As much information as possible, such as what happened, where, when (date/time), who was present and any action taken, and by whom.
- What it is they felt to be unsatisfactory.
- What they believe should be done to address their concern.

Receipt will be acknowledged, if possible, within 7 working days. The complaint will then be investigated. If necessary, specialist advice will be sought. Where clarification or further information is felt to be necessary, the appointed investigator will contact the complainant to request this.

A response will be sent within 14 working days. If this is not possible, a holding reply will be sent after 14 days advising when the investigation is estimated to be completed. The complaint response will explain our findings and what action we will be taking/have taken, subject to the constraints of the Data Protection Act.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they may appeal the decision, by writing to the Chair, the contact details of whom will be included in our response. Appeals must be submitted within 28 days of our response to the complaint.

The appeal should be specific about why the individual feels the decision made was wrong and provide the facts and information necessary to demonstrate this.

A decision will be notified within 28 days and will be final.

6. Additional Considerations

Potential Compensation Claims

If a complaint may potentially result in a claim for compensation, such as damage or loss to property, or personal issue, our insurers are to be notified.

Charity Commission

If the complainant is dissatisfied with First Step Trust's complaints process, they can contact the Charity Commission, who may be able to advise on the matter. The Charity Commission can be contacted at:

http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About_us/Contacting_us/default.aspx

7. Availability

This policy is to be made publicly available and given to anyone who advises that they wish to submit a complaint.

Policy updates

Date Policy last updated: 30 November 2025