

SINCE 9/11 COMPLAINTS POLICY

Organisation	SINCE 9/11
Policy owner	Charity Director
Complaints oversight	Vice Chair
Review cycle	Annually, or sooner if legislation, regulation or organisational arrangements change

1. Purpose and scope

SINCE 9/11 aims to provide high-quality services and to treat everyone who comes into contact with our work fairly, respectfully and professionally. We recognise that concerns may arise and welcome the opportunity to resolve them, learn from them and improve our work.

This policy explains how anyone affected by SINCE 9/11's services, activities or conduct may raise a complaint. This includes young people, parents or carers, schools, partners, supporters, volunteers and members of the public.

Some concerns are more appropriately dealt with under another procedure. Safeguarding concerns will be managed under the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy; concerns raised by workers about serious wrongdoing may fall under whistleblowing arrangements; employment grievances will be dealt with under the relevant employment procedure; and data protection complaints are subject to the additional requirements set out in section 8 below.

2. Our principles

- Complaints will be taken seriously and handled fairly, proportionately and without avoidable delay.
- No person will be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern or complaint in good faith.
- We will seek to resolve concerns informally where this is appropriate, while preserving the right to make a formal complaint.
- We will communicate in clear language and make reasonable adjustments where someone needs help to use this process.
- Young people may raise concerns or complaints themselves and should be supported to do so in a way appropriate to their age and needs.
- Complaints will be handled as confidentially as possible, while recognising that information may need to be shared to investigate the matter, safeguard a child or meet legal or regulatory obligations.

3. Informal complaints and concerns

Where possible, anyone with a concern is encouraged to raise it with a member of the SINCE 9/11 team at the time, or as soon as reasonably possible afterwards. This often enables an issue to be understood and resolved quickly.

We will listen to the concern, consider what can reasonably be done and seek an appropriate resolution. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, the procedure below applies.

4. Formal complaints

Formal complaints should normally be sent to the Charity Director. A complaint about the Charity Director should instead be sent to the Vice Chair, who oversees complaints on behalf of the Board. Correspondence may be marked 'Private and Confidential'.

Current contact details for the Charity Director and Vice Chair will be made available on request or alongside this policy. The current Charity Director is Yvonne Richards and the current Vice Chair is Matthew Hartley.

To help us deal with a complaint effectively, please provide, where possible:

- your name and contact details and, where relevant, your organisation;
- how you would prefer us to contact you and any communication or accessibility needs;
- what happened, including relevant dates, times, places and people involved;
- why you are dissatisfied and any action already taken;
- what you would like SINCE 9/11 to consider doing to resolve the matter;
- any documents or other information that may help us understand the complaint.

A complainant does not need to provide every item above before a concern will be considered. We will provide reasonable assistance where someone has difficulty putting a complaint in writing.

5. How we will handle a formal complaint

We will normally acknowledge receipt within 7 working days. The complaint will then be considered by an appropriate person who has sufficient independence from the matter complained about. Where necessary, we may seek further information or specialist advice.

We aim to provide a substantive response within 14 working days. If this is not possible because the matter is complex or further enquiries are required, we will provide an update explaining the delay and, where possible, when a response can be expected.

Our response will explain our findings and any action taken or proposed, so far as we can appropriately disclose that information. We may be unable to disclose confidential personal, employment, safeguarding or other legally protected information.

6. Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. The response to the complaint will provide the appropriate contact details. An appeal should normally be submitted within 28 days of the complaint response.

The appeal should explain why the complainant believes the decision or process was wrong and identify any relevant information they believe was not properly considered. Wherever practicable, the appeal will be considered by a person who was not responsible for the original decision.

We aim to notify the complainant of the appeal decision within 28 days. If additional time is required, we will explain why. The appeal decision is the final stage of SINCE 9/11's internal complaints process.

7. Safeguarding complaints

Where a complaint raises a concern about the safety or welfare of a child, safeguarding takes precedence over the normal complaints timetable. The concern must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and dealt with in accordance with the SINCE 9/11 Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy.

Where SINCE 9/11 is working in a school or college, the host setting's Designated Safeguarding Lead will normally take the operational lead in relation to concerns about its pupils, while the SINCE 9/11 Designated Safeguarding Lead is also informed. Allegations about an adult working with children may require referral to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or other statutory authority.

8. Data protection complaints

A complaint about SINCE 9/11's handling of personal information will be dealt with in accordance with UK data protection law, including the UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

SINCE 9/11 will provide a clear route for making a data protection complaint, acknowledge such a complaint within 30 days unless the outcome is provided within that period, make appropriate enquiries, keep the complainant informed where necessary, and communicate the outcome without undue delay. A person who remains dissatisfied may raise the matter with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Where a complaint includes both a data protection issue and another complaint, the relevant requirements will be applied together where practicable rather than requiring the complainant to repeat the same information.

9. Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered on the information available. We encourage complainants to provide contact details where they feel able to do so, because this may enable us to investigate more fully, clarify information and communicate the outcome. A complaint will not be disregarded solely because it is anonymous.

10. Wider action and external reporting

Irrespective of the outcome of an individual complaint, SINCE 9/11 will consider whether wider action is required. This may include changes to policies, procedures, training, supervision or working practices.

We will also consider whether the matter gives rise to a legal or regulatory reporting obligation, including where relevant reporting to the Charity Commission, Information Commissioner's Office, Health and Safety Executive, safeguarding authorities, police, Fundraising Regulator or another appropriate regulator or statutory body.

The Charity Commission is the regulator of charities in England and Wales and does not act as an ombudsman for ordinary disputes about a charity's standard of service. Serious regulatory concerns may, however, need to be reported or raised with the Commission.

11. Potential compensation or insurance claims

If a complaint may reasonably give rise to a claim for compensation, liability or insured loss, SINCE 9/11 will notify its insurers where required and will take account of any relevant advice when handling the matter.

12. Confidentiality and records

Complaint information will be handled sensitively and shared only where there is a legitimate need to do so. Personal information will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection law. Records of complaints, investigations, decisions and actions will be retained securely in accordance with SINCE 9/11's record-retention arrangements.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information must be shared to safeguard a child, investigate alleged wrongdoing, obtain professional advice, comply with the law or meet a regulatory obligation.

13. Availability and review

This policy will be made publicly available and provided to anyone who asks how to make a complaint. It will be reviewed annually and sooner where significant legal, regulatory or organisational changes make this necessary.

Version control - Approval and Review

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
2.0	Board of Trustees		2026 review and update	Annually