FFLAG Compliments and Complaints Policy

FFLAG compliments and complaints policy statement

FFLAG is committed to providing high-quality support and services to our beneficiaries, volunteers, and stakeholders. FFLAG welcomes and encourages feedback, including compliments and complaints, as an opportunity to improve our services and ensure accountability.

We take complaints seriously and aim to resolve concerns promptly, fairly, and transparently. FFLAG also appreciates positive feedback about our work, staff, and volunteers. Compliments help us recognise achievements and motivate our team. This Policy sets out how to send a compliment or make a complaint about any aspect of the work of FFLAG. We would encourage you to follow the policy wherever possible.

We also allow for "Whistleblowing" which encourages all users of our services and the public to report any misconduct, law breaking or failure to act by any of FFLAG's trustees or volunteers.

Please contact the Chair or Vice Chair of Trustees directly if you wish to share a compliment or have concerns, a complaint or wish to "blow the whistle" on something that is going on. The Chair or Vice Chair will handle the matter appropriately and you can contact them by sending an email marked for their attention to admin@fflag.org.uk.

Introduction

FFLAG views compliments and complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation who has made any complaint.

FFLAG aims to make sure:

- There is a process to provide compliments or complaints that is fair, clear and easy to use for anyone.
- The existence of our compliments and complaints procedure is publicised so that people know how to contact us.
- Everyone at FFLAG knows what to do if a compliment or complaint is received.
- All compliments are passed to the right person and/or circulated.
- All complaints are fully heard, treated seriously and appropriately handled
- All formal complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner
- Complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- Information is gathered to help FFLAG improve what it does.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for this policy and for ensuring that complaints are handled in accordance with it.

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FFLAG
Supporting families and our LGBT+ loved ones with pride

Compliments

Compliments can be received by personal testimony, email, in writing or via the FFLAG website. Compliments will be recorded for the purposes of reporting. Where the compliment involves a named person then that person will be informed and praised for their work.

Complaints

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of FFLAG's work. Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in our work.

Complaints may be raised verbally (face to face or by telephone) or in writing (by letter or by email). A verbal complaint is treated informally and we will try to resolve it immediately. Where the complaint cannot be resolved the complainant will be asked to put it in writing, or, if they prefer, be given the chance to talk formally to someone from FFLAG.

Any written complaint will be treated as a formal complaint.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and in line with FFLAG Confidentiality Policy.

How to make a complaint

The easiest way to make a complaint is to raise it when the issue occurs. It can be raised directly with a trustee, member of staff or to a volunteer. They will try and resolve the situation and if they do to the complainant's satisfaction that is the end of the matter. We regard these as informal complaints.

If the complaint is not resolved, or if the complainant would prefer to raise it in writing in the first place, then it should be raised as a formal complaint. The best way to raise a formal complaint is to email the Chair and Vice Chair of Trustees using the admin@fflag.org.uk email address. If the complaint involves the Chair and you would prefer another Trustee to hear your complaint please specifically address your email to the Vice-Chair of Trustees. Any written complaints received that are not addressed to the Chair or Vice-Chair will be passed to them at the earliest opportunity.

If you do not have access to email you can write to the Chair or Vice-Chair at:

FFLAG
c/o Connected Voice
1 Strawberry Lane

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Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4BX

Handling complaints

Verbal complaints

Verbal complaints are initially treated as informal complaints. This does not mean we do not take it seriously, but rather we try to resolve it in an informal way. On receiving such a complaint it should immediately be referred to a FFLAG trustee who will meet with the complainant either personally or virtually. They will hear the issue through, clarify what the desired resolution is, and try to resolve the issue. If the issue is not resolved they will explain to the complainant that they can make the complaint formal and explain how to do that. Unless it is impractical to do so they will provide them with a copy of this policy. If that is not possible they should take the complainant's detail and email them the policy at the earliest opportunity. In addition, the trustee will tell them the policy is available on the FFLAG website (www.fflag.org.uk).

If someone says at the start of the interaction that they wish to make a formal complaint it is important the response is not "then you must send it in writing". Rather the complainant should be referred to a trustee who will try to resolve the issue as if it was an informal complaint. At the end the trustee should clarify whether the complainant still wishes to make a formal complaint. If the complainant still wishes to make a formal complaint the trustee should provide them with a copy of this policy. If that is not possible they should take the complainant's details and email them the policy at the earliest opportunity. In addition, the trustee will tell them the policy is available on the FFLAG website (www.fflag.org.uk).

If the complainant does not wish to discuss their complaint but go straight to a formal complaint, then they should be told that the policy is available on the FFLAG website (www.fflag.org.uk).

Written complaints and formal complaints

Complaint letters and complaint emails are always treated as formal complaints. We take all complaints seriously but formal complaints receive a formal response – wherever possible in writing.

Please note we will monitor social media comments as a form of feedback on the charity but we do not regard comments posted on social media as being a formal or informal complaint.

Written complaints will normally be made to the Chair of Trustees. However, if the complaint involves the Chair then it may be made to the Vice-Chair.

On receipt the Chair (or Vice-Chair) will make a reasonable attempt, within 7 days, to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and inform the complainant which Trustee is handling the complaint. The complainant should also be sent a copy of the Complaints Policy.

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The person handling the complaint will:

- Ensure they understand the complaint and, if necessary, request clarification information from the complainant. They may ask to meet with the complainant if the complaint handler thinks that is needed.
- If at any time it appears the final response will take more than 4 weeks from receipt of the complaint, the complaint handler should inform the complainant when the response can be expected. If this takes even longer an update to the complainant should be provided.
- The complaint handler will make a thorough investigation of the complaint, interviewing people and examining documentation as relevant. They will also seek to establish what action the complainant would like to be taken to rectify the issue.
- The complaint handler will draft a response to the complaint which details how the complaint was investigated and what action is being taken to resolve the complaint.
- The complaint handler will select a trustee, who is neither the Chair, nor the Vice-Chair nor any trustee who is involved in the complaint, to review their response.
- The letter will explain the options open for appeal – as detailed below.
- The complaint handler will send the response to the Chair, or Vice-Chair, to forward the resolution letter to the complainant.
- The complaint handler will bring the complaint to the next Board meeting for discussion and for the Board to try to draw learning from it.

Appealing the decision

Appeals can be made to FFLAG, to the Charity Commission or, if appropriate, the Fundraising Regulator.

Appeals to FFLAG

Appeals to the decision of the complaint handler may only be made to FFLAG if:

- the process was not followed, or
- significant new information has come to light, or
- the complainant can show that the decision ignored key facts.

The appeal should be made to the person who received the initial complaint i.e. the Chair or Vice-Chair. It must clearly state the grounds for the appeal. The Chair or Vice-Chair will then either ask another trustee to take a second look at the issues or will handle the appeal themselves. The nature of action taken will depend on the grounds for appeal. As with the initial complaint, a response letter will be drafted and reviewed by another trustee before being sent by the Chair or Vice-Chair.

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The letter will explain that there is no further avenue to pursue this within FFLAG and that if the complainant is still not satisfied they have the option to complain externally.

The trustee who investigated the appeal will bring the complaint to the next Board meeting for discussion and for the Board to try to draw learning from it.

Appeals to External Bodies

At any point a complainant can decide to take their complaint to the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission website has details on how to raise complaints to them.

Approved by the Board:	July 2025
Next review:	2030