

# Queen's Park Trust

Revision v1.0, dated 11th May 2026



## Complaints Policy

Any person can make a complaint, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the trust about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

### **The difference between a concern and a complaint**

A concern may be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’.

A complaint may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint’s procedure. The trust takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the trust will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint’s procedure.

### **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure for instance; providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

### **Anonymous complaints**

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, we will, if appropriate, determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

## **Time scales**

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member, board member or volunteer as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA), safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against the trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

## **Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure the trust wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review policies considering the complaint
- an apology.

## **Withdrawal of a complaint**

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 5 days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

## **Formal complaints**

Formal complaints must be made to a person in an officer role (unless they are about them).

This may be done in person or in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form).

The trust will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 2 days.

Within this response, the trust will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The trust can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

During the investigation, the trust (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the trust will provide a formal written response within 10 days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the trust is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The trust will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome thus far.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint further – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the trust. This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to this stage must be made to the head of the trust within 10 days of receipt of the previous response.

The trust will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 2 days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The trust will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 days of receipt of the escalation request. If this is not possible, the trust will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the trust will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

This stage will be heard by the trustees and an independent panel member.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 days before the meeting, the trust will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from the first stage of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place.

Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the trust's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and the trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 days. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the trust in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - o sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - o interviewing staff and other people relevant to the complaint
  - o consideration of records and other relevant information
  - o analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the

- questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond and prepare a comprehensive report for the trust or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The trust or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

A Complaints Co-ordinator could be the CEO / designated complaints governor or trustee or other staff member providing administrative support.

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure and to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - o sharing third party information
  - o additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a vulnerable person
- keep records.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it.

Both the complainant and the trust are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself.

## **Aims of the meeting**

- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minted
- they liaise with the complaints co-ordinator, if the trust has one

## **Committee Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so  
No trustee may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the trust and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting  
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a vulnerable person and present during all or part of the meeting.

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the person and give them equal consideration.

## **Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour**

There are rare circumstances where we will deviate from the Complaints Procedure.

These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff, members of the local governing body or trustees is abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening;
- where the complainant's behaviour is hindering our consideration of complaints and/or the proper running of the trust because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact, such as, if the complainant:
  - refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
  - refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
  - refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
  - insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
  - introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into

- account and commented on
  - raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
  - makes unjustified complaints about staff/volunteers who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
  - changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
  - seeks an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff/volunteers
  - makes excessive demands on the trust’s time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff/volunteers regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
  - knowingly provides falsified information
  - publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums
- where the complainant’s complaint is clearly frivolous, vexatious and/or has patently insufficient grounds. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a ‘frivolous’ or ‘vexatious’ complaint as:
  - complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
  - insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
  - insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
  - complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
  - demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value
- where the complainant’s complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full.

In these circumstances, we may:

- inform the complainant that their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent and ask them to change it;
- restrict the complainant’s access to the trust e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times. Any such arrangements will be reviewed after six months;
- conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing;
- refuse to consider the complaint and, where the initial stage of this procedure applies, refer the complainant directly to the final stage.

In all cases we will write to tell the complainant why we believe their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

We may take the decision not to respond to any further correspondence where:

- we have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant’s concerns
- the complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options and
- the complainant contacts us repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case for ceasing further correspondence is stronger where:

- letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive or make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff/volunteers
- we have reason to believe the complainant is contacting us with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, members of the local governing body or trustees, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential.

If the complainant believes the trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under law, they can contact the local authority after they have completed the final stage.

#### Approval and review

Approved by:	Ray Lancashire
Policy owner:	Queen’s Park Trust
Policy author:	Lydia Abou-Jaib
Date:	06/05/2026
Review date:	06/05/2027