

## Participant Grievance Policy

We hope that New Note Projects offers everyone a safe, happy and enjoyable experience. However we acknowledge there may be rare situations that create a negative experience for you.

This grievance policy is here to help highlight and resolve concerns, and to give you guidance and support if you're going through this process.

Policies are non-contractual and may be amended from time to time, to suit the needs of the charity and remain compliant with UK charitable law.

### In a nutshell

A grievance is a concern, problem or complaint about your participation, terms and conditions, or relationship with another participant or facilitator. If you have a grievance, we'll make sure we deal with it as quickly as possible. We'll try to resolve problems informally if we can, but if things can't be resolved this way you can follow the formal process.

### Informal approach

If there's a problem, an informal approach is our preference. We can usually solve small complaints just by talking to each other and getting a better understanding of what's going on. If you have a complaint or concern about something, arrange a time to speak with Molly Mathieson (contact details at the bottom of this document). She will listen to what's happening and aim to handle the matter as discreetly as possible and in a supportive way. This can be done either via Zoom or on the telephone.

When you have a discussion, notes of what was discussed and agreed will be taken. There's no specific right to be accompanied to informal meetings, but if you ask and there's a suitable person readily available, we'll allow them to come along with you.

If things don't improve, or if you feel your concern is so serious that it can't be resolved informally, you can follow the formal approach.

### Formal approach

If you formally raise a grievance, you'll need to first put your concerns in writing (by email or by post) and send it directly to Molly Mathieson. It's helpful for you to include:

- The exact reason for your grievance
- What steps you've already taken in order to try and resolve the issue
- Details of times, names, incidents
- Any supporting documentation/evidence
- What your ideal outcome would be

We know you'll want whatever the issue is to be addressed as soon as possible, so we'll aim to get in touch within 5 working days of receiving your grievance, inviting you to a grievance hearing to talk about it. We'll always give you at least 24 hours' notice of your hearing, giving you time to prepare.

## **Hearing your grievance**

Your grievance will usually be heard in-person by a trustee, in this policy we'll call them the hearing manager. Molly Mathieson will also be present. You should come to your hearing ready to talk about your concerns as fully as possible, as we need as much information as possible. During the hearing we'll discuss your concerns and ask questions to make sure we get a good understanding of the situation. You can bring a companion to this meeting; you'll find more details later in this policy. There will always be someone with the hearing manager to take detailed notes of what was said - we'll make sure everyone's happy with their accuracy at the end or soon after the hearing. Your hearing manager will then gather as much information as they can, and they'll likely need to speak to other people as part of their investigation - they'll do this as discreetly as possible.

## **The outcome**

Once the hearing manager is satisfied that they've gathered all the information, they'll make a decision on what the outcome of your grievance should be.

## **The possible decisions are:**

- Grievance not upheld - if the manager doesn't find evidence to support your grievance
- Grievance fully upheld - if the manager finds evidence to support your grievance
- Grievance partially upheld - if the manager finds evidence to support some of the concerns you've raised but not others

In addition to deciding on whether to uphold your grievance, the hearing manager will make a recommendation on what action should be taken to resolve the situation.

Once a decision has been made, we'll write to you confirming this, as well as outlining the actions needed (if any). This will usually be within 10 working days of your hearing, but we'll let you know if it's going to be any longer. We may want to follow up with you after an outcome has been reached, to check in and see how effective the resolution was.

## **Attending hearings**

We expect you to do what you can in order to attend any hearing, but if you or your chosen companion can't make it, speak to Molly Mathieson as soon as possible letting her know why. We'll look at your reasons for not being able to attend on a case-by-case basis, and if we agree to reschedule, we'll work with you to find a time that works for everyone. If you don't turn up to your hearing, or don't respond by the agreed deadline, we'll assume you no longer want to continue the process. However, please bear in mind that if we think it's a serious matter, we might continue to take action in the interests of New Note Projects.

Just so it's clear, there will always be someone in the meeting to take notes, which you'll receive a copy of afterwards.

## **Bringing a companion**

You have the right to bring a companion with you to any formal grievance hearing. If you'd like to bring a companion with you, please let the hearing manager know beforehand. You should give as much notice as you can, as we'll need to be sure they're a suitable companion (eg not involved in the issue). If we don't feel they're suitable, we'll suggest an alternative person. Your companion can call adjournments during the meeting, and may take notes, but they cannot speak on your behalf or take any participative role in the meeting. They're there for your support and as a witness.

## **Written representation**

In exceptional circumstances, we might allow you to respond to the hearing manager's queries in writing. This may be an option if, for example, you feel unable to attend in person due to health reasons. We'd prefer to speak to you in person but will consider each request to make written representation on a case-by-case basis.

## **Things to think about**

If you raise a grievance about something that's been heard before and the circumstances haven't changed, we may decide not to hear it again. But we hope to resolve all concerns the first time round, and that this won't be an issue. If you raise a grievance and we believe that you've intentionally made untrue allegations, we may decide not to pursue the process.

## **Final steps**

We are committed to resolving complaints promptly and fairly. However, there may be instances where all avenues of our complaints procedure have been exhausted, and a resolution that satisfies both parties cannot be reached. In such cases, we will conclude the complaints process and provide a final response.

Our final response will:

- Outline the steps taken to investigate the complaint.
- Detail the reasons for our decision.
- Provide guidance on external options for escalation, if applicable.

While we aim to resolve every issue, we respect the decision of individuals who may wish to disengage from the process at any stage. Should this occur, we will acknowledge their decision in writing and provide information on any other avenues of support available.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention and for allowing us the opportunity to address them.

## **Contact details for Molly Mathieson**

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