**Northamptonshire Parent Carer Voice (NPCV)**

**Complaints Policy**

**1. Policy Statement**

NPCV strives for high standards in the participation, engagement and involvement of the Parent Carer Forum. We welcome any communication from individuals, forums, charities and any other organisation on all aspects of the Parent Carer Forum. The communication is invaluable in helping us to evaluate and continually improve our service.

NPCV understands that complaints may be received from time to time and want to ensure that there is a clear process for those complaints to be made and dealt with. Complaints about the Parent Carer Forum, any individual Director, Representative or staff member of the Forum will be taken seriously, and action will be taken where necessary to deal with any issues and improve our service for the future.

NPCV believes that everyone in the organisation has a responsibility to handle complaints effectively, learn from them and improve.

NPCV believes if you are unhappy with any aspect of the Forum that, in the first instance, you speak to someone directly to discuss your concern in an informal manner as quickly as possible. However, if this is not possible, please follow the complaints procedures outlined below.

The objectives of the NPCV Complaints Policy are to:

* ensure everyone knows how to provide feedback and how a complaint will be handled.
* ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear time frames.
* provide a fair and effective way to complain.
* ensure that compliments and complaints are monitored and used to improve our services.
* ensure that those who have experienced unsatisfactory service from NPCV are dealt with fairly.
* ensure that all insured losses are effectively handled by and recovered from NPCV’s Insurers.

We will ensure that we:

* listen carefully to complaints and treat complaints as confidential, where possible.
* Record, store and manage all complaints accurately and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.
* Investigate the complaint fully, objectively and within the stated time frame if it is deemed an investigation is necessary after completion of the pre-investigation phase. Notify the complainant of the results of any investigations and any right of appeal. Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented in order to avoid further re-occurrence.
* Where appropriate, include in the Annual Report, the number of compliments and complaints received, the key outcomes of investigations and any action.

2. **Definition of a complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by a stakeholder, whether justified or not. A person may make a complaint if they feel NPCV has:

• Failed to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service.

• Delayed in providing a service.
• Made a mistake in the way it has provided a service.
• Failed to act in a proper way.

• Provided an unfair service.

1. Whilst complaints may be written or verbal, NPCV undertake a pre-investigation phase to seek to verify / authenticate any accusation or allegation through detailed evidence before embarking on a complaints process.
2. This detail or evidence may be in written form, testimony from witnesses, photographs or voice recording.
3. Wherever possible complainants will be asked to put the full complaint into writing and asked to provide supporting evidence for investigation.
4. Where complaints cannot be substantiated with evidence NPCV will note the matter but shall not be obliged to undertake further actions.
5. Where a complaint relates to multiple NPCV volunteers each complaint must be submitted separately and will be dealt with as a separate case.
6. Complainants must not address or share any complaint issue with any other agency or body whilst the complaint is in process or runs its full course (respect for the complaints process). Any such action will cease the complaint with immediate effect and no further action will be taken.
7. The FMC may remove from the membership anyone making malicious/ vexatious/ unfounded/ unsubstantiated allegations.

This policy and procedure relate only to complaints received about NPCV and its services. Individuals who make complaints about partner organisations / individuals will be notified in writing within five working days that they need to complain to the organisation / individual against which they have the complaint. NPCV will signpost with contact details, where appropriate.

3. **Withdrawal of Complaints**

Complainants may withdraw their complaint at any time.

If a notice in writing, or electronic communication is received, from the complainant, withdrawing a complaint, an acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant indicating that the matter is closed, however all documentation will be securely stored in the complaints file.

NPCV will continue to review any matters that have arisen and seek to improve practice etc, through policy change, practice change, training etc.

4. **Overview**

The objectives of NPCV Complaints policy are to:

1. Ensure everyone knows how to provide feedback and knows how a complaint should be handled.
2. Have a clear process of who to complain to, how a complaint is dealt with, a clear timeline of the complaint process, who will respond to you and how, what to do if you are unhappy with the response.
3. Ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly, consistently and sensitively.

NPCV will ensure that we:

* Where possible we will treat all complaints as confidential.
We will listen carefully and be open to hearing the complaint.
* Record, store and manage all complaints accurately and in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
* Investigate complaints fully, objectively and within the stated timeframe.
Notify the complainant of the results of the investigation and any right of appeal.
* Notify the complainant of any action that will be implemented.

5. **Complaints Procedure**

There are three stages of the complaint’s procedure: -

Stage One – Pre- investigation stage

Stage Two – Internal Complaint
Stage Three – External Complaint

**Stage One**

To make a complaint in the first instance please contact our Director on ????

Whilst complaints can be written or verbal, NPCV will undertake a pre-investigation phase to seek to verify / authenticate any accusation or allegation through detailed evidence before embarking on stage two of the complaints process.

**Stage Two**

1. In attempting to resolve the issue, the complaint will be listened to and acknowledged, we will do our upmost to clarify the nature of the complaint and what the complainant wants to happen because of their complaint.
2. NPFG aims to settle complaints quickly and satisfactorily. The complaint if upheld may be resolved informally by way of an apology, by providing an explanation of why a situation occurred, or by another appropriate action.
3. Complaints will be acknowledged within seven working days and you will receive a final response within 30 working days of the commencement of stage two. Either a Director or a member of the representative group will investigate your complaint and respond to you.

The complaint will be held on file for 12 months, if the complaint is not upheld then no record will be kept.

**Appeal**
If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, then you have 14 working days to appeal to Directors and progress to Stage three of the complaint procedure.

**Stage Three**

If an individual disagrees with the decision from Stage Two they can request an Independent Review within 14 working days and progress to Stage Three.

An appropriately experienced individual who is not a member of NPCV would be asked to review the complaint and any investigation or actions taken.

The independent individual would then make a recommendation about whether:

a)  They feel the investigation and decision was arrived at appropriately.

b)  If they disagree then would make recommendations.

6. **Anonymous Complaints**

Complaints sent anonymously will be recorded and considered but won’t be acted on.

7. **General Data Protection Regulations**

To process the complaint, NPCV will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides, and which other people give in response to investigating the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be made known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applies, or allegations are made which involves conduct of third parties.

**Monitoring and Review**: This is the current version of NPCV Complaints Policy. The policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if required in the light of any complaint or should relevant legislation change.