

St Ives Community Orchard CIC

Complaints Procedure



Statement of intent

St Ives Orchard CIC aims to create an environment where all volunteers feel valued and the public feel safe.

We recognise that there may be occasions when volunteers and members of the public have concerns or grievances and this Complaints Procedure enables individuals to raise grievances or concerns more formally. The procedure provides an open and fair way for anyone to make known their problems and aims to enable grievances to be resolved quickly before they become major problems.

How we will try to do this

To achieve this, we commit to the following actions:

- Continuing to improve our services by listening and responding to the views of team members and people attending events and activities and canvassing opinions through surveys.
- Welcoming comments or suggestions about our activities and procedures to make sure the organisation works as efficiently and effectively as possible. Feedback, concerns or grievances can be submitted on our feedback form:
<https://www.stivesorchard.co.uk/feedback/>
- Treating all complaints and grievances confidentially.
- Not discussing complaints and grievances with any person beyond those immediately involved in the complaint and the Board of Directors, unless explicit permission is given for wider discussion. When making a complaint we encourage you to give your name and contact details. We do accept anonymous complaints but it may be difficult to investigate such complaints fully (see below).
- Keeping records regarding all complaints, anonymous or otherwise, on file for a period of 5 years.
- Ensuing that all team members are familiar with and follow the process outlined below.

When making a complaint or when there is a grievance

Informal Discussions

In the first instance, if anyone has a complaint or a grievance, they should discuss it informally, as soon as possible, with the relevant Project Manager (Orchard Project Manager, Nature Reserve Project Manager, or CORE Project Manager).

If the complaint or grievance involves one of the Project Managers it should be discussed with one of the Committee members or one of the Directors.

The complaint or grievance will be taken seriously, and everything will be done to try and resolve the issue informally.

It is hoped that the majority of concerns will be resolved at this stage.

Formal Procedure

If the person with a complaint or grievance feels that the matter still needs to be resolved through informal discussions, they should put the complaint or grievance in writing to the relevant Project Manager. If the complaint involves one of the Project Managers, the complaint should be put in writing to one of the Directors via email or post.

The following information should be provided:

- A clear description of the complaint or grievance and what you would like us to do to resolve it
- Your full postal address, phone number and e-mail address.
- If you are complaining about a person, whether or not you are happy for your name to be disclosed to them and/or your complaint to be discussed with them.

The complaint or grievance will be reviewed by all appropriate Directors and a meeting will be held between the person with a complaint or grievance and a nominated Director to respond to the complaints raised. The meeting will be an opportunity for the person with a complaint or grievance to explain the complaint or grievance and discuss if and how they should be addressed.

The person with a complaint or grievance has the right to be accompanied to the meeting by another person for support. The Project Manager / Director has a right to request a member of the committee accompany them to the meeting.

Following the meeting, the Project Manager or Director will provide a written response within 10 working days of the meeting outlining how the complaint or grievance will be responded to.

The Director may need to carry out further meetings or investigations. In this case, The 10 working days limit above may need to be extended if the complaint or grievance is against a team member or requires further investigation.

The response will follow the meeting and any subsequent investigations and will be shared with all directors. The Directors' decision will be final.

Anonymous Complaints

Anyone wishing to make a complaint or raise a grievance is encouraged to identify themselves as this helps ensure the complaint or grievance can be properly investigated and resolved.

Anonymous complaints or grievances will be accepted, but if an anonymous complaint is made, responsible members of the organisation will be unable to seek further information from the person making the complaint or raising a grievance and may have difficulty in investigating the complaint or grievance.

Also, responsible members of the organisation will not be in a position to notify an anonymous person who has made a complaint or raised a grievance of the outcome or action taken by the organisation.

The organisation may reserve the right to determine whether to apply this procedure in respect of an anonymous complaint or grievance in light of the following considerations: the seriousness of the issues raised in the complaint; the credibility of the complaint; and how likely it is that the complaint can be confirmed from attributable sources.

The organisation will investigate anonymous complaints within the limitations of the information provided as appropriate.

All complaints, anonymous or otherwise, will be kept on file for a period of 5 years.

Accounting and Auditing Matters

Board of Directors and the Management Committee will be notified of any concern or complaint about accounting and auditing matters and work together to resolve any matters arising.

All reported concerns or complaints regarding corporate accounting practices, internal controls or auditing will be addressed by the Board of Directors.

Whistleblowing

Members of the public, volunteers, committee members and directors of St Ives Orchard CIC who raise concerns or who cooperate in inquiries or investigations, either internal or external, shall under no circumstances suffer harassment, retaliation or adverse consequence.

This commitment is intended to encourage and enable directors, members and volunteers and others to raise serious concerns within St Ives Orchard CIC prior to seeking resolution outside of the organisation.

Any member of the organisation who retaliates against someone who has raised a concern in good faith will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of membership or directorship.

Any director, member, volunteer or member of the public who believes that they have been subjected to any form of retaliation as a result of raising a concern in good faith should immediately report their concerns to the Directors or a member of the Management Committee.

Adhering to this Policy

Acting in Good Faith

It is expected that anyone making a complaint or raising a concern is acting in good faith. Anyone raising a complaint or concern about a violation or suspected violation of some policy, practice or activity of anyone associated with the St Ives Orchard CIC should have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates that such a violation has taken place.

This policy is relevant to anyone who volunteers or works with St Ives Orchard CIC, or is involved in events and activities.

The policy is available either on request or on our website.

Please email admin@stivesorchard.co.uk with suggestions as to any interventions/actions that could help us to implement this policy as effectively as possible, or to report any activities that may cause concern.

St Ives Orchard CIC will then endeavour to address and resolve any issues raised within 30 days.

Date Policy Updated: April 2024

All St Ives Orchard CIC policies will be reviewed at least every two years and updated when necessary to reflect changes in statutory requirements and best practice guidance.

Please note - the following terms are used in St Ives Orchard CIC policies

St Ives Community Orchard CIC: also sometimes referred to as St Ives Orchard CIC or the organisation.

Volunteers: Directors, Committee Members, Project Managers, Work Party Team Leaders and Participants, and various other roles.

Partners: those with whom we work.

Contractors and suppliers: those who may work for us or provide services to us.

Participants: anyone participating in activities and events.