Complaints Procedure

Last Updated:	November 2025
Last Reviewed by Trustees:	November 2025
Next Review Due:	November 2026

Version	Date	Changes
1.1	Nov 2022	None
1.2	Nov 2023	Throughout – Operations Manager changed to Head of Finance and Compliance
1.3	Nov 2024	Throughout – version control and dates
1.4	Nov 2025	Throughout – version control and dates

Introduction

We consider a complaint to be any expression of dissatisfaction (oral or written) about the provision of, or failure to provide, a service. All complaints are treated seriously and acted upon appropriately. If a person wishes to raise a formal complaint and require a formal response then we will follow the process below. Active Cheshire is a small charity and therefore does not benefit from a dedicated complaints department or complaints person. It is therefore our policy that all complaints be reported to the Head of Finance and Compliance who will then decide who is best to handle the complaint and respond appropriately using the following policy. If possible, we will try to prevent complaints occurring using the advice at appendix 2.

1. Acknowledge
2. Record
3. Investigate
4. Resolve & Reply

How we Handle Complaints

At Active Cheshire we take any complaint very seriously.

Any complaint, whether made in writing or verbally, is immediately referred to the Head of Finance and Compliance. We also electronically record any complaint we receive in SharePoint. Our Head of Finance and Compliance is responsible for ensuring that we thoroughly investigate and record any complaints.

Record keeping

All complaints must be properly recorded on receipt and at each appropriate stage of handling by the Head of Finance and Compliance using:

a) the complaints record log for individual complaint details (Example at Appendix 1)
b) The Complaints Register to maintain a single record of all complaints received

We make and keep records of complaints for a minimum period of three years from the date of receipt of the complaint. These records will include the following:

- The name of the individual
- The nature of the complaint
- Copies of all correspondence relating to the complaint

This is fulfilled by retaining a specific complaint file for all complaints handled by Active Cheshire and retaining relevant documents in the individual customer file.

As soon as a complaint is received.

All written complaints will be acknowledged by the Head of Finance and Compliance in writing within five business days of receipt.
All verbal complaints will be acknowledged by the Head of Finance and Compliance verbally or by email within 48 hours of receipt.
All email complaints will be acknowledged by the Head of Finance and Compliance by email within 48 hours of receipt.

All verbal and email complaints will also be acknowledged by the Head of Finance and Compliance in writing within five business days of receipt. This acknowledgement letter will also contain our understanding of the complaint and will ask you to confirm in writing that you agree with our understanding of the matter.

If the complaint can be resolved within the five-day deadline, the acknowledgement letter will outline the result of our investigation.

If our investigation has not been completed within the five-day deadline, our acknowledgement letter will confirm that we will follow these stages to resolve the complaint.

Stage 1 – Review by management team (response within 5 days)

If you are still dissatisfied with the response or wish your complaint to be investigated further we ask that a written reply to register your dissatisfaction is sent to support@activecheshire.org or by sending a letter to Active Cheshire, Wyvern House, The Drumber, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 1AU. Please remember to include a return address or an email address to allow us to reply.

Stage 2 – Review by CEO (response within 7 days)

If you are not satisfied with the response from the management team please notify us in writing and the issue will be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer. The formal complaint will be reviewed again by the CEO and a further formal response will be given within an additional 7 days from the point of escalation.

Stage 3 – Review by Board of Trustees (response within 14 days)

If the response is still deemed unsatisfactory the CEO may escalate the complaint to the board of directors where an independent member of the board will review the complaint and provide a formal response within an additional 14 days. If it is not possible to issue a response within this timeframe an expected response date will be communicated to you.

Please note that in the event that a customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint the decision of the Active Cheshire board of trustees is final and no further communication will be entered into regarding the original complaint.

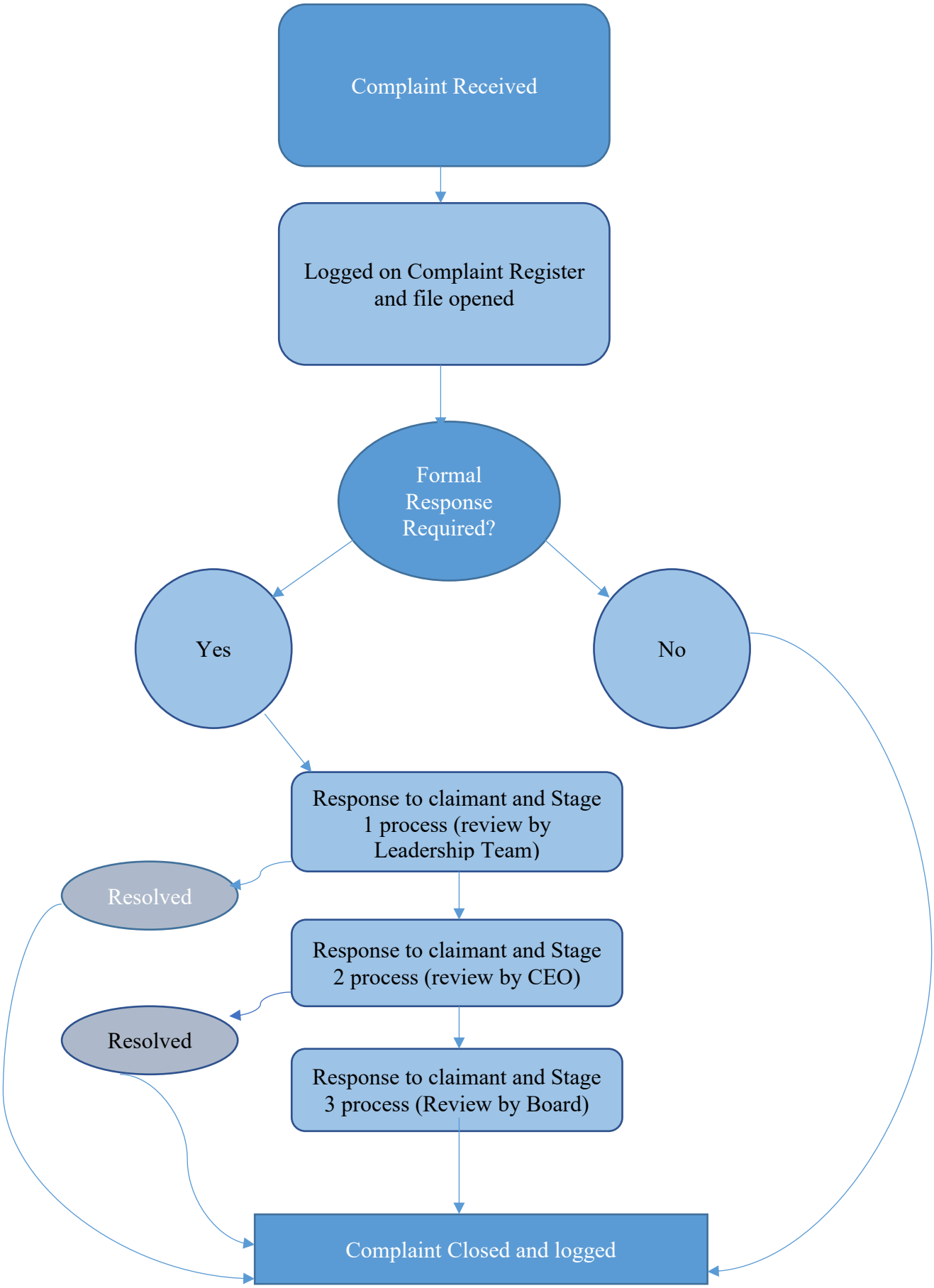
Closing the complaint

Where Active Cheshire receives confirmation from the client that he/she is satisfied with the findings of the investigation and any resolution, the complaint will be considered closed and recorded as such on the register.

Provided no challenge to the findings of the investigation and any resolution offered is received from the complainant within eight weeks of the firm's resolution letter, the complaint may also be considered closed.

Complaints will be reviewed in monthly management meetings with a view to learning and adapting procedures to prevent future complaints.

Complaints Process flow



Appendix 1

Complaint logging form

Key Details required

Logged by	
Date & Time	
Complaint Reference No.	COMP NO:
Customer Name	
Customer Address	
Customer Contact number	
Service referred to	
Description	Complaint details:

Impact of Complaint	Description of impact on customers' business/operation
Acknowledgement	Date letter sent to Customer:
Corrective action/resolution	Details of findings and proposed solution:

Resolution confirmed by	Date:
Customer Contacted	Date:
Customer Followed up	Date:
Key Issues identified	
Long term actions required	

Issues and actions accepted	Date

Appendix 2

Active Cheshire Complaints de-escalation & Prevention

Active Cheshire is a value led organisation, and our values are Innovation, Inclusivity, Passion, Collaboration, Integrity.

During our charitable endeavours, we strive to create symbiotic relationships and meaningful partnerships. We accept however, that

No matter how well we run our business, we may not always please everybody. The occasional customer complaint is almost inevitable from stakeholders, partners or members of the public.

We have a formal complaints process in place for dealing appropriately with matters which meet the criteria of that policy – which can be found here (LINK). However, with reasonable endeavours, we hope to avoid as many issues from progressing to the formal stage as possible.

There are several important steps to take that can stop customer complaints before they happen. Here are some of the most important.

1. Thank customers for their feedback

Customer feedback is important to Active Cheshire and as such, we should communicate this with our customers, partners and stakeholders. Customers should be informed that their feedback will be taken seriously as we look to constantly improve how we deliver our services.

2. Deploy technology

Miscommunication is a prime cause of customer complaints, so we need to ensure we provide as much information as possible. In the first instance, every effort should be made to hold an in-person call/meeting/video call. The personal interaction, demonstrating we are listening is very important. A follow up email should be sent, paraphrasing the call, and noting any important points or actions.

3. Open up new channels of communication

We will communicate the improvements we make due to the feedback we have received, both to those providing feedback and to our wider stakeholders/partners through appropriate 'you said, we did' messaging.

4. Find creative ways to ask for feedback

Feedback will help us to improve and learn from our experiences. Beit good or bad feedback, encourage it from partners in whatever medium they feel most comfortable.

5. Don't make promises you can't keep

If you can't deliver on a promise, you lose your customers' trust, and without their trust, you lose their loyalty. The easiest way to ensure you reduce customer complaints is to manage customer expectations. Ensure the promises you make are deliverable and completed in a timely fashion. If you don't, you're only giving customers more ammunition to complain.

6. Empower our staff with better training

Our employees are our biggest asset, and they can easily walk out on us. This affects everything from staffing, operations, and overall service levels, the result: customer complaints. Give our staff a reason to come into work every day. When our staff is happy, they'll treat our customers better because the company's success directly affects their own success — and their job security.

7. Improve internal communications

Communicate often and thoroughly within and across all departments. This way we can catch problems and create solutions before our customers can.

It’s important for managers to keep their ear to the ground and play a role in making improvements, not only in their own field of expertise but as an unbiased third party in other departments.

8. Record and analyse customer complaints

By tracking and logging complaints no one in the organization can use the excuse “I didn’t know that was a problem” or “I didn’t know how to resolve the problem”. Every complaint the company hears should have a case file and potential problem-solving options to help avoid customer complaints of this type. Plus, the more you’re reminded, the more you’ll never want to deal with that complaint again.