

# **AUTSCAPE COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Autscape views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person that has made the complaint.

## **Our policy is:**

- To provide a fair complaints procedure that is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone on the board knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

## **Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Autscape.

## **Where Complaints Come From**

Complaints may come from members and non-members who have a legitimate interest in Autscape.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

## **Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

## **Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed periodically to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

## **Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board of trustees.

## **Review**

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on 27th June 2015

# **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

## **Contact Details for Autscope Complaints**

Written complaints may be sent to The Honorary Secretary, Autscope, Armstrong House, First Avenue, Robin Hood Airport, Doncaster, DN9 3GA

or by e-mail to [secretary@autscope.org](mailto:secretary@autscope.org).

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 07511 774654

or in person to any of Autscope's trustees at any of our events or activities.

## **Receiving Complaints**

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.

The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name and address
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Autscope (for example: member, participant)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see [Appendix 1 – Practical Guidance For Handling Verbal Complaints](#).

## **Processing Complaints**

The Honorary Secretary has delegated authority to process complaints and all complaints not sent direct should be passed to the Honorary Secretary within two days.

On receiving the complaint, the Honorary Secretary records it in the complaints log.

The Honorary Secretary will bring the complaint to the attention of the board at the earliest opportunity or within 2 days, and they will lead the investigation.

If a complaint relates to a member of the board, they shall be excluded from the investigation.

If a complaint relates to the Honorary Secretary, then the complaint should be brought to the Chair, who will delegate another board member to lead the investigation, and the Honorary Secretary will be excluded from the investigation.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the Honorary Secretary, or the person delegated by the Chair to handle the complaint, within 2 days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

The complaint will be investigated taking into account the most relevant policies or guidance and discussion will take place on the Board email list.

For further information on how to investigate a complaint, see [Appendix 2 – Guidance on Investigating and resolving a Complaint](#).

The board must agree by a majority vote on a course of action including any sanctions that may be imposed on a member or participant.

The Honorary Secretary or the person delegated to handle the complaint is responsible for ensuring any action resulting from the above is acted upon.

Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within two weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

The Honorary Secretary or the person delegated to handle the complaint is responsible for ensuring the complaint is handled in accordance with this policy and taking any action resulting from the above.

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any time.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk) under Variation of the Complaints Procedure. The Board may vary the procedure for good reason.

### *Variation of the above for complaints received at Events*

*Wherever possible the board should attempt to resolve any complaints received at an event before the event ends.*

*Complaints received at an event should therefore be passed to the Honorary Secretary, or Chair in cases where the complaint is about the Honorary Secretary, within 12 hours at the event.*

*Any board member receiving a verbal complaint at an event should acknowledge receipt of the complaint verbally. See [Appendix 1 – Practical Guidance For Handling Verbal Complaints](#).*

*If the Honorary Secretary or Chair receive a written complaint at an event, they should attempt to find the complainant and verbally acknowledge receipt.*

*All complainants should, wherever possible, be given a copy of the complaints policy and informed that the board will attempt to resolve the matter and inform them of the outcome before the event ends, or, if it is not possible to inform them of the outcome before the event ends, that they will be informed of either the progress of the complaint or the resolution within two weeks of the event ending.*

*Once the Honorary Secretary or the Chair have been informed of the complaint, they must log the complaint and use their judgement to either call an emergency board meeting or bring it to the next on-site board meeting for discussion.*

*The board must agree by a vote of a majority of those present, which must be a minimum of a quorum, on the next course of action, including any intervention or sanctions that may be imposed on any member or participant.*

*The Honorary Secretary, or Chair if they received the complaint, is responsible for ensuring any action resulting from the above is acted upon.*

*The Honorary Secretary, or Chair if they received the complaint, may also convey the outcome to the complainant verbally if it is resolved at the event and time permits.*

*If the event finishes before any of the above stages are able to be completed, the Honorary Secretary, or Chair if they received the complaint, must bring it to the board email list within 2 days of the event ending and continue at the relevant stage of the Normal complaint procedure.*

## **Appendix 1 – Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints**

Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation.

Listen. Allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam".

Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry. Show an interest in what is being said.

Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details.

Ask for clarification wherever necessary.

Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down.

Acknowledge the person's feelings, even if you feel that they are being unreasonable. You can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation, e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you".

If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise.

Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue.

Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.

Don't promise things you can't deliver.

Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.

Make sure that the person understands what they have been told.

## **Appendix 2 – Guidance on investigating and resolving a complaint**

Try to find as much evidence as possible relating to the complaint, e.g. did somebody say something, see something, hear something?

Are there any witnesses?

Do other people share the view/opinion of the complainant? Have they complained too?

If the complaint is about a person or persons, if appropriate, ask the person or persons complained about what happened.

Check complaints against our articles, constitution, policies and guidelines.

Bring the evidence to the Board email list with a summary of your findings with the subject line: Complaint – please read.

Inform the board you would like their opinion and state a deadline for giving it. After the deadline, summarise the replies and send to the board with either of the following:

If the consensus is that the complaint is not justified, make a proposal to the board that the complaint is not upheld. Set a deadline for the vote.

If the consensus is that the complaint is justified, make a proposal to the board that the complaint is upheld, setting a deadline for the vote.

If there is no consensus, ask the board to discuss further. Set a deadline then make one of the above two proposals to the board again.

After the proposal, if the vote is a majority decision that the complaint is not upheld, inform the complainant.

After the proposal, if the vote is a majority decision that the complaint is upheld, if appropriate, decide by vote and a majority decision if any disciplinary action or change in policy/procedure is necessary.

**If the complaint is being handled at an event**, bring your findings to the next on-site board meeting for discussion and make a proposal to resolve the complaint. The proposal should include any action that the board will take at the event. Continue to make proposals until a majority vote is achieved.