Triangle Community Garden

Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and Procedure

1. Revision History

Date	Details	Author	Review due
Feb 2010	New policy	John Cliff	
March 2013	Policy revised to include compliments and comments	Vicky Wyer	Mar 2016
March 2016	Policy reviewed	Vicky Wyer	Mar 2019
March 2019	Policy reviewed	Vicky Wyer	Mar 2022
June 2022	Policy reviewed	V Wyer	Mar 2025
May 2025	Policy reviewed	V Wyer	May 2028

2. Introduction

2.1. The Triangle Community Garden aims to provide a fair and high quality service, within our stated aims and priorities and welcomes feedback from visitors, volunteers, gardeners, members, other individuals and organisations we work with, on all aspects of our services. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us to improve our work.

2.2. The **purpose** of this document is to:

- Set out our policy on feedback, including complaints, and how we will respond;
- Ensure that everyone knows how to make a complaint or compliment;
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and quickly;
- Ensure that compliments and complaints are monitored and used to make changes to improve our services.

2.3. We will:

- Listen carefully to all feedback, including complaints
- Wherever necessary treat complaints as confidential
- Ensure that wherever possible, and except for reasons of legality or confidentiality, our management of complaints is open and transparent
- Record and store all personal data in accordance with GDPR
- Fully investigate the complaint quickly
- Write to the complainant with the results of the investigation and the reasons for it, inform them of any actions implemented to prevent a recurrence and to tell them of any right of appeal
- Report to each Trustee Meeting the number of compliments and complaints received, the findings of any investigations and actions taken.

2.4. This Policy and Procedure does not replace any legal rights an individual or organisation may wish to explore.

2.5. At all times legal, statutory or professional investigations will take primacy over the Complaints Policy and Procedure and the Triangle Community Garden will not undertake any actions that may compromise any external investigations.

3. Definitions

3.1. Complaints

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by anyone using our services whether justified or not. An individual or other organisation may make a complaint if they feel that the Triangle Community Garden has:

- Failed to provide a service
- Failed to provide a timely or acceptable standard of service
- Made a mistake in the way it has provided a service
- Provided an unfair service
- Failed to act in a proper way

3.2. Comments

Any verbal or written feedback, including criticism, which is not regarded by the sender as a complaint and therefore does not require an investigation / response. For example comments made by gardeners in the course of their reviews, feedback sheets at the end of workshops. Such feedback will be logged in the Comments Register.

3.3. Compliments

Any verbal or written compliment will be recorded by the person receiving the compliment and be passed to the person responsible (or other appropriate person) for recording in the Compliments Register. Feedback on compliments will be shared with staff at appropriate times.

4. The Complaints Procedure

4.1. There are normally two stages to the complaints procedure:
Stage One: The Complaint
Stage Two: The internal appeal to the Board of Trustees
Additionally where the complaint concerns a service funded by an external body such as the County Council, there may be right of appeal to them.

Stage One: The Complaint

a) What you need to do if you have a complaint

Write to the Triangle Community Garden explaining your complaint as fully as possible. Your letter should be addressed to the Project Manager at The Triangle Community Garden, 23 Priory Way, Hitchin SG4 9BJ and marked "Private and Confidential". Please include your name, a contact address and telephone number and the name of the organisation you represent, if appropriate. The Triangle Community Garden can help you to put your complaint in writing, or signpost you to someone who can support you to do this. **TCG cannot respond to anonymous complaints.**

Where the complaint is about or involves the Project Manager then the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, at the same address.

If an individual prefers to make a verbal complaint then the person dealing with it on their behalf **must** record the details on the Complaints Form. If an individual asks for a copy of this Policy and Procedure including a Complaints Form, TCG will send these out, where possible on the **same day or within 3 working days** of the request.

b) What the Triangle Community Garden will do

On receiving a complaint TCG's Project Manager will ensure that it is logged on to the complaints register.
In cases where TCG receives a complaint about a member of staff, volunteer, gardener or individual on placement:

i) We will investigate the matter in line with this policy and procedure,
ii) If the complaint involves a paid member of staff then the TCG Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure will also be invoked,
iii) If it is appropriate to report the matter to the Police then investigations will cease.

In all cases, the Project Manager (or Chair of Trustees) will contact you within 5 working days with written confirmation that your complaint has been received and an investigation has begun. If the Project Manager is not available, the matter will be referred to a nominated Trustee.

The Project Manager (or nominated Trustee) may be able to resolve the complaint quickly by way of an apology, by providing the service required or by providing an acceptable explanation. The Project Manager (or nominated Trustee) will complete a 'Complaints Investigation Report' (see appendices) and send a copy of this to you.

If it is not possible to resolve the complaint quickly then the Project Manager (or nominated Trustee) will fully investigate the complaint by interviewing any relevant staff, volunteers or

gardeners. The Project Manager (or nominated Trustee) may seek advice from our insurers and/or from external advisers. If the investigation is likely to be time-consuming or complex, the Project Manager (or nominated Trustee) may involve up to two other Board members. Notes will be taken of any interviews and the interviewees will receive a copy. If interviewees do not agree with the record they can raise any points with the Chair who will have the final say as to whether it is an accurate record of the interview. The Chair will list any evidence seen (e.g. letters, files, emails, etc.).

All parties involved in the investigation will be asked to keep the matter private and confidential. Staff may seek advice if they consider that the Triangle Community Garden Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure will need to be invoked.

You will receive a copy of our "Complaint Investigation Report" within 21 days. This will be in writing, unless you have requested that we use another medium. It will include a summary of what has been done to investigate the complaint and any proposed action to remedy the situation. Having received the report you then need to complete the return slip indicating if you are satisfied with the outcome of the investigation or not.

In the unlikely event that the investigation is not going to be complete with 15 working days, then you will be informed in writing explaining the reasons for the delay and giving an indicative date when the investigation will be complete.

Stage 2: Internal Appeal to the Board of Trustees

a) What you need to do

If you are dissatisfied with the decision that has been made you can appeal. To make an appeal you need to complete the return slip of the Complaints Investigation Report indicating that you are not satisfied and wish to move to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure. This must be done within 10 working days of having received the Complaints Investigation Report.

b) What the Triangle Community Garden will do

You will be invited to make your appeal in person to an 'Appeals Panel' consisting of 3 Triangle Community Garden Trustees not previously involved in the investigation. They will have been given a copy of the Complaints Investigation Report, but will not have discussed the matter with the investigator or the staff involved.

The role of the Appeals Panel is to see if your complaint has been dealt with properly and fairly and whether an appropriate decision has been reached, not to re-investigate the complaint. Where the complaint is against a member of staff, that person will be given the opportunity to submit a written statement to the Appeals Panel. This will be considered alongside the original complaint, the investigation report and any action suggested to remedy the situation.

You will be given at least 10 working days' notice of the date, time and venue of the Appeals Panel meeting and all reasonable efforts will be made to hold the meeting at a time convenient to you. You may bring someone to assist you, or to witness the procedure.

The Appeals Panel will write to you within 10 working days to notify you of its decision and any actions to be taken to address the complaint. There will be no further recourse to the Triangle Community Garden and no further correspondence will be entered into by TCG.

Stage 3: External Appeal

Where this is available the arrangements will be different according to the body concerned. If there is a right of appeal to an external third party, you will be advised of whom to contact when the Appeal Panel issues its decision.

5. Confidentiality

5.1. Wherever appropriate we will treat complaints as confidential.

6. Monitoring

6.1. Compliments, comments and complaints are an important tool, which alongside other user feedback and evaluations will allow TCG to learn about how individuals and other organisations view TCG's services and how well they are provided. To ensure that we learn from compliments, comments and complaints this information will be reviewed by the Project Manager on a regular basis. Complaints will be reported to the Board monthly; other information on a quarterly basis. Wherever possible the information will be used to improve and develop services.

7. Publication

- This policy will be available at Ransom's Pavilion, and on the Triangle Garden website: www.trianglegarden.org. It is available on request in hard copy – please email info@trianglegarden.org or write to Triangle Community Garden, c/o Hitchin Initiative, 1A Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HR.
- Current and new members of staff, volunteers, trustees, tutors, hirers and contractors will be made aware of its existence and any revisions made.

Appendices:

- **Complaints Form**
- **Complaints Investigation Report**

Triangle Community Garden Complaints Form

Name of Complainant:

Address:

Tel Number:

E-Mail:

Describe your complaint including what happened, where it happened, when it happened and who was involved (add more pages if you need to):

Date complaint made:	
Signature of complainant:	

For Office Use:

Date Complaint received:	
Name and signature of person receiving the complaint:	
Date complainant notified of its receipt and how (e.g. letter, email):	
Name and position (e.g. Chair) of person dealing with the complaint:	

Triangle Community Garden Complaints Investigation Report

Name of person(s) investigating with the complaint And position in the organisation:	

Outline of complaint:

Details of investigation :(Paper work looked at, interviews held etc.)
Complaint Upheld (delete as appropriate): **Yes** **No**

Reasons for decision:
Actions to be taken::

Date result with report sent to complainant:	
Signature of investigator:	

RETURN SLIP Please complete, detach and return to (name of contact person and name and address of of association).	
Complainant Name:	
I am satisfied with the results of this investigation:	tick here if you are satisfied: [….]
I am <u>not</u> satisfied with the results of this investigation and wish to move on to Stage 2	tick here if you are NOT satisfied: [….]
Signature	
Date	