



Complaints Policy

CARA welcomes feedback, both positive and negative on any aspect of its services. Feedback is regarded as a useful tool to enable us to review and improve the services we provide.

This policy lays out CARA's formal complaints procedure and aims to ensure that all complaints are dealt with swiftly, appropriately and fairly.

Procedure

Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved informally through discussion between the complainant and a member of the CARA team. CARA's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Helen Parr, can be contacted by telephone (01206 367881) or e-mail (helen@caraessex.org.uk) to discuss the complaint and try and find an informal resolution.

If an informal solution cannot be found, the complaint should be set out in writing and addressed to the CEO. The complaint should include the name and contact details of the complainant, whom and/or what the complaint is about as well as all relevant dates. If the complainant is unable to put their complaint in writing they should telephone CARA on 01206 367881 and ask to speak to the CEO.

Any complaint will be acknowledged by the CEO, normally within five working days of receipt.

The CEO will investigate the circumstances outlined in the complaint and follow one of the following procedures:

1. If the complaint is about a specific member of staff or volunteer, the CEO will approach that person to address the problem on a one-to-one basis.
2. If the complaint is not about a member of staff or volunteer, but relates to another issue, the CEO will assess the situation and take any necessary action.

The CEO will then inform the complainant in writing of what has been done to address their complaint. She will also inform the Chair of Trustees that a complaint was received, its nature, and what action was taken.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the CEO's action on the complaint, the CEO will refer the matter to the Chair of Trustees. The decision on what action to take is at the Chair's discretion. The Chair will inform the Trustee Board that a complaint has been made, its nature, and what action was taken.

The Chair will inform the complainant in writing of her decision, no later than 42 working days after first receiving the letter of complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision, they may write a letter of appeal to the Vice Chair who will then need to bring the case before the Trustee Board.

The Trustee Board (without the Chair's involvement) will aim to come to a decision and to notify the complainant of its conclusions within 28 working days of receiving the letter of appeal, together with a clear explanation of the reasons for reaching them. The decision of the Trustee Board is final.

If the complaint relates to the CEO, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of the CARA Trustee Board, c/o CARA, Mailbox 302, Communications House, 9 St John's Street, Colchester CO2 7NN. If the complaint relates to the Chair of the Trustee Board, the complainant may directly contact the Vice Chair, at the same address.

All complaints received, together with a copy of the response to the complainant, will be kept on file.

Complaints will be monitored, and information from this monitoring will be fed into the future planning process, as appropriate.

Date procedure was agreed and adopted: March 2023

Date review due: March 2026

Person/s responsible for review: CEO/Trustees