**Complaints Policy**

The Freeman Heart & Lung Transplant Association (FHLTA) 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 take seriously any concern or complaint
* To provide a fair complaints procedure which 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 ensure that the FHLTA Trustees has read, understood and comply with the procedure – knowing 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 improve what we do.

**Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of FHLTA and the work we do.

**Where Complaints Come From**

Complaints may come from any individual, volunteer or group of individuals who have a legitimate interest in FHLTA, including the general public if something is perceived to be improper. 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.

**Responsibility**

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

**Review**

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

**Procedure**

Written complaints may be sent to: FHLTA Chairperson, Adele Lambert - 8 Harebell Meadows, Newton Aycliffe, Co Durham, DL5 4UG or by email to [enquiriesfhlta@mail.com](mailto:enquiriesfhlta@mail.com)

Verbal complaints to be made by phone to FHLTA Chairperson, Adele Lambert on

07873 330361.

In person complaints can be made to any FHLTA Trustee/Committee member at any of our events or meetings.

**Receiving Complaints**

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 (eg date and nature of the complaint)
* Take the complainant’s name, address and telephone number.
* Note down the relationship of the complainant to FHLTA e.g. Volunteer.
* 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 email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant’s own words.

**Resolving Complaints**

**Stage One**

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to solve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the FHLTA Chairperson within five working days – a Trustee of the FHLTA can mediate an information meeting to attempt a fair resolution.

On receiving the complaint, the chairperson records it on the complaint’s spreadsheet. If it has not already been resolved, they themselves (or delegate to an appropriate person) should investigate and take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond. If the complaint relates to a Trustee(s) it may be necessary for the individual(s) involved to be suspended from their duties to ensure the investigation is fair and thorough.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the handling the complaint within five working days, where possible. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaint procedure should be attached. Ideally complaints should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply may 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.

**Stage Two**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed with the Board of Trustees.

At this point the complaint will be passed to the Board of Trustees The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Board of Trustees may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitable senior person(s) to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case, speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One - following which a more formal meeting maybe necessary. (As in stage 1, if the complaint relates to a Trustee(s) it may be necessary for the individual(s) involved to be suspended from their duties to ensure the investigation is fair and thorough). The person who dealt with the original complaint at stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complaints should receive a definitive reply within a month. 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 upheld or not, the reply to the complaint 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.

**External Stage**

As FHLTA is a UK registered charity, the complainant can complain to the UK Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kinds of complaints the Charity Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

**Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Trustees may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example a complaint about a Chair or trustee should not also have the Chair and/or trustee involved as a person leading a Stage Two review.

**Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

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

**Change Record**

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| Date of Change: | Changed By: | Comments: |
| 14/10/2020 | LMcL | Policy approved by the Trustees |
| 13/01/2021 | AL | Chairperson |
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