APPEER Connecting autistic girls and women

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE V1.7

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all complaints about Appeer's services or operations are handled in a timely, fair, and sensitive manner, and that lessons are learned to improve services and effectiveness. This policy aims to:

- Provide clear guidance for handling complaints.
- Ensure a fair and consistent approach.
- Encourage constructive feedback and continuous improvement.

Note: Complaints relating to safeguarding or child protection issues must follow the Appeer Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy /Safeguarding Adults Policy.

Scope
This policy applies to:

- Staff, volunteers, service users, parents/carers, and members of the community.
- All complaints related to Appeer services, operations, or activities, excluding safeguarding concerns.
- Feedback that does not constitute a formal complaint.

Principles
Appeer is committed to:

- **Fairness:** Treating all complaints objectively and respectfully.
- **Transparency:** Clear communication on processes and outcomes.
- **Confidentiality:** Protecting the privacy of complainants and those involved.
- **Responsiveness:** Acting promptly and learning from complaints to improve services.

Types of Complaints

Informal Complaints
Some complaints may be minor or easily resolved through informal discussion:

- Complainants are encouraged to speak directly with the staff member involved or email them (copying in the CEO if appropriate).
- Staff will aim to put things right and adapt future practice where necessary.

Formal Complaints

Formal complaints are appropriate when:

- Issues are not resolved informally.
- Complaints are complex or require higher-level consideration.

Submission:
Must be made in writing within three months of the incident.
Sent to:
CEO - CEO@appeer.org.uk or Appeer's registered address.

If about the CEO, send to Board of Directors – at directors@appeer.org.uk.

Required information:

- Complainant name and contact information
- Name of person affected (if different)
- Details of the complaint (what happened, impact, where and when)
- Names of those involved

Acknowledgment: Complaints will be acknowledged within **5 working days.**

Investigation

- Investigations are led by a member of the Senior Management Team or the line manager of the staff member/volunteer involved.
- Additional information or discussions may be requested by phone or email.
- All complaints will be handled fairly, confidentially, and respectfully.

Outcome

- Written outcomes will be provided within **28 working days** of receipt (or receipt of any further requested information).
- **Remedial action** will be taken where possible.
- If action is not possible, Appeer will explain why, apologise, and outline learning points.

Escalation: If unsatisfied, contact the Board of Directors (directors@appeer.org.uk). The Board will respond within **28 working days.** Their decision is **final**.

Feedback

Issues not qualifying as formal complaints will be treated as **feedback**, including:

- Comments on the type of work Appeer undertakes
- Suggestions or concerns about policies or decisions

All feedback will be acknowledged and passed to relevant staff for consideration.

Refusal of Complaints

Appeer may refuse a complaint if:

- It is about events over three months ago
- It attempts to reopen a previously resolved complaint
- It is anonymous
- It is unreasonable or vexatious

Roles and Responsibilities

CEO: Overall responsibility for the policy and ensuring complaints are handled fairly and promptly.

All staff and volunteers: Responsible for acknowledging complaints, handling them respectfully, and escalating where appropriate.

Monitoring and Review

Complaints and outcomes will be **monitored regularly** to identify trends and areas for improvement.

This policy will be **reviewed periodically** and updated as needed.

Policy Variations

Appeer reserves the right to **amend or vary this policy**.

Any variation requires the **written consent of Appeer**.

Further Information

For questions or clarifications, contact:

CEO –CEO@appeer.org.uk

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE Version No: 1.7	
Summary:	Our policy outlining our policy and processes for informal and formal complaints about our services.
Policy Owner:	Annaliese Boucher
Author:	Annaliese Boucher
Target Audience:	Participants, Parents/Carers, Appeer staff, management and volunteers
Approved and Ratified By:	Jo Dilworth
Version Date:	V1.7
Date of issue:	1st October 2026
Next Review Date:	1st October 2027

Change Record				
Date	Author	Version	Page/s	Reason for Change
19th March 2024	Jo Dilworth	1.3	Throughout	Changes in role
19th March 2024	Jo Dilworth	1.4	Throughout	Changes in complaint response time
1st October 2025	Annaliese Boucher	1.5	Throughout	Change to post holders
13th January 2026	Sarah Nolan	1.6	Throughout	Staffing Changes
1st October 2026	Annaliese Boucher	1.7	No material change	Staff contacts/ office address