



Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

1.1 Cardiff Outdoor Group is committed to dealing effectively with complaints about DofE expeditions. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible we will put right any mistakes we have made and we will apologise. We aim to learn from mistakes and use that experience to improve what we do.

1.2 Our definition of a complaint is 'an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the Award Expeditions or a volunteer leader that requires a response from the group.'

1.3 This complaints procedure supports our commitment and is a way of ensuring that anyone with an interest in the Award expeditions can raise a concern, with confidence that it will be heard and, if well-founded, addressed in an appropriate and timely fashion.

2. Have you asked us yet?

2.1 If you are approaching us for the first time you should give us a chance to respond. If you are not happy with our response then you may make your complaint using the procedure we describe below. Most concerns can be settled quickly just by speaking to the relevant person in the group, without the need to use a formal procedure.

3. Our approach to answering your concern or complaint

3.1 We will consider all your concerns and complaints in an open and fair way.

3.2 At all times the group will respect the rights and feelings of those involved and make every effort to protect confidential information.

3.3 Timescales for dealing with your concerns or complaints may need to be extended following discussion with you.

3.4 We may ask for advice from the regional office of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award where appropriate.

4. Answering your concern or complaint

4.1 Most complaints can be resolved at various stages outlined below. You can bring a relative or companion to support you at any time during the process but you will be expected to speak for yourself. However, we recognise that when the complainant is a pupil it is reasonable for the companion to speak on their behalf and/or to advise the pupil.

4.2 As far as possible, your concern or complaint will be dealt with on a confidential basis. However, there could be occasions when the person dealing with your concern or complaint will need to consider whether anyone else within the school needs to know about your concern or complaint, so as to address it appropriately.

4.3 If you are a pupil under 16 and wish to raise a concern or bring a complaint we will ask for your permission before we involve your parent(s) or carer(s). If you are a pupil under 16 and are involved in a complaint in any other way, we may ask your parent(s) or carer(s) to become involved and attend any discussion or interview with you.

Stage A

5.1 If you have a concern, you can often resolve it quickly by talking to a volunteer expedition leader. You should raise your concern as soon as you can; normally we would expect you to raise your issue within 10 days of any incident. The longer you leave it the harder it might be for those involved to deal with it effectively.

5.3 We will try to let you know what we have done or are doing about your concern normally within 10 days, but if this is not possible, we will talk to you and agree a revised timescale with you.

5.4 The person overseeing your concern or complaint will keep you informed of the progress being made. This person will also keep a log of the concern for future reference.

Stage B

6.1 In most cases, we would expect that your concern is resolved informally. If you feel that your initial concern has not been dealt with appropriately you should put your complaint in writing to the Family Liaison Officer. (FLO)

6.2 We would expect you to aim to do **this within seven days of receiving a response to your concern as it is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as soon as possible.**

6.3 The FLO will invite you to discuss your complaint at a meeting. Timescales for dealing with your complaint will be agreed with you. We will aim to have a meeting with you and to explain what will happen, normally within 10 days of receiving your letter. The FLO will complete the investigation and will let you know the outcome in writing within 10 days. Should the matter be related to Child Protection Issues or a matter of Equal Opportunities then it will be referred to the Family Liaison Officer. If it should be with regard to the Safety of an event and/or risk assessment then it needs to be referred to the Health and Safety (HSO) Officer - Timescales and procedures are exactly the same for the HSO as FLO.

Stage C

7.1 It is rare that a complaint will progress any further. However, if you still feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly, you should write to the Chair of Cardiff Outdoor Group setting out your reasons for asking the Chair to consider your complaint. You do not have to write down details of your whole complaint again.

7.2 We will let you know how the complaint will be dealt with and will send a letter to confirm this.

7.3 The letter will also tell you when all the evidence and documentation to be considered by the Chair must be received. Everyone involved will see the evidence and documentation before the meeting, while ensuring that people's rights to privacy of information are protected. The letter will also record what we have agreed with you about when and where the meeting will take place and what will happen. The timescale may need to be changed, to allow for the availability of people, the gathering of evidence or seeking advice. In this case, the person dealing with the complaint will agree a new meeting date with you.

7.4 Normally, in order to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible, so the Chair will not reschedule the meeting more than once. If you ask to reschedule the meeting more than once, the Chair may think it reasonable to make a decision on the complaint in your absence to avoid unnecessary delays.

7.5 We will write to you within 10 days of the meeting explaining the outcome of the Chair's consideration.

7.6. The Chair is the final arbiter of complaints.

8. Our commitment to you

8.1 We will take your concerns and complaints seriously and, where we have made mistakes, will try to learn from them.

8.2 If you need help to make your concerns known we will try and assist you. If you are a young person and need extra assistance the Welsh Government has established MEIC which is a national advocacy and advice helpline for children and young people. Advice and support can also be accessed from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

MEIC may be contacted by freephone: 0808 802 3456, or text: 84001. This service is operated 24 hours a day.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales can be contacted by freephone: 0808 801 1000 (Monday to Friday 9a.m. to 5p.m.), text: 80 800 (start your message with COM) or e-mail: advice@childcomwales.org.uk

January 2016