



Complaints Policy

FACE – Family and Community Enterprise | Registered charity 1179629 | Working as FAM

Head office: Central Buildings, Richmond Terrace, Blackburn, BB1 7AP | Applies at head office and all FAM outreach sites

REFERENCE	VERSION	OWNER	REVIEW
FAM-PE-16	1.0 (September 2026)	Operations Lead	Annually

Status: approved by the Board of Trustees on 10 September 2026.

Our commitment

FAM welcomes feedback, including complaints. A complaint tells us where we have fallen short and helps us improve. We will listen, treat every complaint fairly and in confidence, respond on time, and put things right where we can.

1 Purpose and scope

- 1.1** This policy sets out how FACE – Family and Community Enterprise (registered charity 1179629), working as FAM, handles complaints from young people, parents and carers, volunteers, supporters, partners and members of the public.
- 1.2** A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, spoken or written, about our services, activities, fundraising, staff, volunteers or trustees, which needs a response. Someone does not have to use the word "complaint".
- 1.3** This policy does not cover:
 - **Safeguarding concerns:** any complaint that suggests a child or adult may be at risk of harm, or that a staff member or volunteer may have harmed someone, is passed immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and dealt with under the safeguarding policies. See section 3.
 - **Staff grievances:** these follow the Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure.
 - **Volunteer concerns** about their own role: these follow the Volunteer Policy, although volunteers may use this policy if they prefer.
 - **Whistleblowing:** concerns about wrongdoing raised by staff, volunteers or trustees follow the Whistleblowing Policy.
 - **Requests about personal information**, such as a subject access request: these follow the Data Protection Policy, although complaints about how we handled personal information can start here.

2 Our commitments

- Make it easy to complain, in person, by phone, by email, by letter or through a member of staff.
- Help people who need support to complain, including young people, people with SEND, and people who speak little English. We will arrange an interpreter or accept a complaint made through a trusted adult or advocate.
- Never treat anyone less favourably because they have complained. Young people will not lose their place on a programme for complaining.
- Keep complaints confidential, sharing details only with those who need to know.
- Be honest when we get things wrong, apologise, and explain what we will change.

2.1 Anonymous complaints will be looked into as far as possible, although we may not be able to respond.

3 Safeguarding complaints

3.1 If a complaint includes any suggestion that a child, young person or adult is at risk, or that a member of staff, volunteer or trustee has behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm someone, **stop the complaints process and tell the DSL straight away**. The DSL will follow the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy or the Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy, which may include contacting the local authority where the child lives or where the concern arose, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or the police.

3.2 The person who complained will be told that their concern is being handled under the safeguarding procedure. Any part of the complaint that is not about safeguarding can be dealt with under this policy afterwards, as long as it does not interfere with any investigation.

4 How the process works

Stage	Who handles it	Timescale
Stage 1: Informal resolution	The staff member or activity lead involved, or their manager	Aim to resolve within 5 working days
Stage 2: Formal complaint	Operations Lead (or a trustee if the complaint is about the Operations Lead)	Acknowledge within 5 working days; full response within 20 working days
Stage 3: Review by trustees	A panel of at least two trustees with no prior involvement	Acknowledge within 5 working days; decision within 20 working days

4.1 If we cannot meet a timescale, for example because an investigation is complex, we will tell the person why and give a new date.

Stage 1: Informal resolution

- 4.2** Many concerns can be sorted out quickly by talking. The person receiving the complaint should listen, apologise where appropriate and try to resolve it. They record the complaint and outcome in the complaints log, even when it is resolved on the spot. If the person is not satisfied, or the complaint is serious, it moves to stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal complaint

- (a)** The complaint is made in writing, or a staff member writes it down and the person confirms it is accurate.
- (b)** The Operations Lead acknowledges it within 5 working days and explains what will happen next.
- (c)** The Operations Lead, or someone they appoint who was not involved, looks into it. This may include speaking to the person who complained, staff and volunteers, and reviewing records.
- (d)** The Operations Lead writes to the person within 20 working days explaining what was found, whether the complaint is upheld, any action being taken, and how to ask for a review if they are not satisfied.

- 4.3** Complaints about the Operations Lead are sent to the Chair of Trustees, who appoints a trustee to handle stage 2. Complaints about a trustee or the Chair go to another trustee nominated by the board.

Stage 3: Review by trustees

- (a)** The person asks for a review in writing within 20 working days of the stage 2 response, saying why they are unhappy with it.
- (b)** The Chair of Trustees appoints a panel of at least two trustees who have not been involved.
- (c)** The panel reviews the records and may meet the person who complained. They may bring a friend, family member or advocate. Young people may bring a trusted adult.
- (d)** The panel writes to the person with its decision within 20 working days. This is the charity's final response.

5 Taking a complaint further

- 5.1** If someone remains unhappy after stage 3, they may be able to go to an outside body, depending on what the complaint is about:

Complaint about	External route
Fundraising (for example, how we asked for donations)	The Fundraising Regulator , once our own complaints process has been completed. FAM follows the Code of Fundraising Practice.
How we have handled personal information	The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) .
Serious concerns about how the charity is run, such as	The Charity Commission . The Commission does not deal with individual complaints about services or decide

Complaint about	External route
misuse of funds, trustees not acting in the charity's interests, or serious harm to beneficiaries	disputes, but it can act on serious regulatory concerns.
Crime, such as fraud or theft	The police or Report Fraud (formerly Action Fraud) .
A funded programme	The funder, if its terms allow complaints to be raised with it.

5.2 We will tell people about these routes in our final response where they are relevant.

6 Recording, learning and reporting

- All complaints, including informal ones, are recorded in the complaints log kept by the Operations Lead.
- Complaint records are kept separately from participant files, and for the period set in the Records Management and Retention Policy.
- The Operations Lead reports to trustees at every board meeting on the number and type of complaints, outcomes and lessons learned.
- Trustees consider whether any complaint reveals a serious incident that must be reported to the Charity Commission under the Serious Incident Reporting Policy.
- We use what we learn to improve our services, training and policies.

7 Unreasonable behaviour

7.1 Almost all complaints are made reasonably. Occasionally a person's behaviour may become abusive, threatening or excessively persistent. In that case the Operations Lead, with the agreement of the Chair of Trustees, may limit how the person contacts us, for example to one named contact or to written contact only. We will explain this in writing and review it. We will still consider any new issues they raise.

8 Making this policy known

8.1 We tell participants and families how to complain when they register, display a short guide at our venues and publish this policy on our website. Staff and volunteers are trained to recognise a complaint and pass it on.

9 How this policy supports our focus

- Young people aged 11 to 25 can complain directly, and we make it easy for young people with SEND or who are new to the UK to do so, including with an interpreter or a trusted adult.

10 Related policies

- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure
- Volunteer Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Fundraising and Gift Acceptance Policy
- Serious Incident Reporting Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Records Management and Retention Policy

Approval record

Approved by the Board of Trustees on	10 th Sep 2026
Signed (Chair of Trustees)	
Next review due	31st July 2027
Version history	1.0, September 2026. New policy; replaces any earlier FAM or FACE version.