

## Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy Approved on: 20/11/2025

Policy Review Date: 20/11/2026

### Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to outline how Creative at HeART CIC manages and responds to complaints from any person or organisation engaging with our services. Creative at HeART CIC is a not-for-profit community interest company dedicated to bringing creative happiness and emotional uplift to children, young people, and families facing difficult or challenging times. We work with schools, hospitals, and charities to promote wellbeing through creativity, compassion, and community connection.

We welcome feedback — both positive and negative — as it helps us celebrate what we do well and continually improve our services. We recognise that at times, individuals may be dissatisfied with the service they have received or attempted to receive from us. Everyone has the right to raise a complaint, and we are committed to ensuring that all complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly, and respectfully.

### Policy Statement

Creative at HeART CIC aims to provide the highest standard of service and act in the best interests of the children, families, and communities we support. All complaints will be treated with respect, confidentiality, and impartiality.

We are committed to:

- Listening carefully and responding appropriately to concerns.
- Resolving issues quickly and constructively.
- Using all feedback as a learning opportunity to improve practice and strengthen trust in our services.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Directors holds overall responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented effectively, that standards are maintained, and that learning from complaints informs ongoing improvement.

The CEO (Dean Ashworth) is responsible for the day-to-day management of this policy, ensuring that all complaints are handled consistently, fairly, and in accordance with this procedure.

Complaints may be investigated by the CEO, a designated member of staff, or, where appropriate, an independent director or advisor not directly involved in the issue raised.

All staff, volunteers, and delivery partners are expected to support this process and ensure concerns are reported promptly.

### Eligibility

Any person or organisation who uses, has used, or has an interest in Creative at HeART CIC's services may raise a complaint. This includes:

- Children, young people, parents, and carers.
- Schools, hospitals, and partner charities.
- Volunteers, community partners, and members of the public.

Creative at HeART CIC reserves the right not to respond to complaints that are malicious, abusive, or clearly unfounded. Anonymous complaints may be considered if sufficient detail is provided to allow reasonable investigation.

### Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring our complaints process is open and accessible to all. Copies of this policy will be provided upon request, digitally or in print. Assistance will be given to those with communication or language barriers, and staff can help record a complaint if someone is unable to do so in writing.

### How to Make a Complaint

#### 1. Informal Complaints:

We encourage concerns to be raised informally at first, as many issues can be resolved quickly through open communication. Informal complaints can be made verbally, by phone, email, or in person. A relevant member of staff or director will discuss the issue and seek to resolve it as soon as possible, ideally within two weeks.

If the issue requires further investigation, the complainant will be advised of the expected timescale and kept updated. All informal complaints will be recorded using the Complaint Record Form to ensure we learn from every concern raised.

#### 2. Formal Complaints:

If an issue cannot be resolved informally, or the complainant prefers a formal process, they may submit a written complaint via email or letter addressed to the CEO. If assistance is required, a member of staff can help write down the details, and the complainant will be asked to confirm its accuracy.

A written acknowledgment will be sent within 7 days, outlining how the complaint will be investigated and the expected timeframe for a full response.

The investigation will normally be conducted by the CEO or an appointed senior representative. If the complaint concerns the CEO, the case will be referred to the Chair of the Board or another independent director.

A written response will be provided within 14 working days wherever possible. If more time is required, the complainant will be informed and given revised timescales.

### **Appeals Procedure**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal in writing to the Chair of the Board within 30 days of receiving the outcome. The Chair (or an independent reviewer) will conduct or commission a further impartial review and provide a final written response within 30 days. This decision will be final within the organisation.

### **Learning from Complaints**

All complaints and their outcomes are recorded in the Complaints Register, which is reviewed regularly by the Board to identify trends, risks, and learning opportunities. Key findings and actions arising from complaints will be discussed at staff and board meetings to ensure lessons learned are embedded into service delivery, training, and future planning.

### **External Review**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after exhausting internal procedures, they may contact the CIC Regulator or Charity Commission for external review:

- Website: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>
- Phone: 0300 066 9197

### **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

All complaints are handled in accordance with UK GDPR and data protection legislation. Information will only be shared with those directly involved in investigating or resolving the complaint. Records will be stored securely and retained in line with our Data Protection and Record Retention Policy.

### **Promotion of Policy**

Creative at HeART CIC actively promotes awareness of this policy by:

- Making it available to all staff, volunteers, and service users.
- Providing copies on request and publishing a summary on our website.
- Encouraging open dialogue and opportunities for feedback throughout service delivery.

### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the CEO and Board of Directors, or sooner if required by legislation, regulation, or changes in best practice.