

Herefordshire City of Sanctuary

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Introduction

Herefordshire City of Sanctuary is committed to providing high-quality services and creating a positive and inclusive environment for refugees, people seeking sanctuary, volunteers and the local community.

We value feedback and take all complaints seriously. This policy outlines how complaints will be handled, ensuring that they are addressed in a fair, transparent, and timely manner.

Scope

This Complaints Policy applies to all Herefordshire City of Sanctuary activities, including but not limited to:

- Activities and events organised solely by Herefordshire City of Sanctuary.
- Interactions between volunteers and individuals receiving support.
- The quality and accessibility of the services provided to refugees, people seeking sanctuary, and other vulnerable individuals.
- The behaviour of Herefordshire City of Sanctuary volunteers, and partners.

How to Make a Complaint?

1. Informal Complaints:

- We encourage individuals to address concerns informally, where possible. If someone is dissatisfied with an aspect of our service, we recommend they speak directly with a member of the Management Committee or the volunteer involved.
- Many issues can be resolved through a respectful conversation, and we encourage a solution-oriented approach.

2. Formal Complaints:

- If a concern cannot be resolved informally, individuals should submit a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of the Herefordshire City of Sanctuary, c/o Friends Meeting House, King Street, Hereford HR4 9BX.

3. What to Include:

- The nature of the complaint (what happened).
- Details of the individual(s) involved.
- Any steps already taken to resolve the issue (if applicable).
- Any supporting evidence (e.g., emails, photos, records of communication).
- Preferred outcome or resolution (if applicable).

Complaints Procedure

1. Acknowledgment:

- Once a complaint is received, it will be acknowledged within 5 working days.

2. Investigation:

- The complaint will be investigated by a member of the management committee who will gather facts, review evidence, and interview relevant parties.
- We will aim to complete the investigation within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. If additional time is needed, we will inform the complainant of the delay and provide a new timeline.

3. Resolution:

- After completing the investigation, we will inform the complainant of the outcome and any actions taken. This may include:
 - An apology or explanation.
 - A change in service or practice.
 - Referral to external bodies if necessary (e.g., local authorities, regulatory bodies).

4. Outcome Review:

- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they can request a review of the decision. This review will be conducted by different member of the group who was not involved in the original investigation.
- The review process will be completed within 10 working days of the request.

Anonymous Complaints

Herefordshire City of Sanctuary will accept anonymous complaints, though it may be more difficult to investigate these effectively without specific details.

Whenever possible, we will respond to anonymous complaints and take appropriate action.

Unreasonable Complaints

We are committed to addressing all complaints fairly and thoroughly. However, we recognise that some complaints may be unreasonable due to their nature or frequency. Unreasonable complaints may include those that are excessively repetitive, malicious, or unrealistic, or those where no clear or actionable issue is raised. In such cases, we reserve the right to limit our response or refuse to engage further.

We aim to resolve all complaints in a constructive manner, but we also strive to maintain a balanced approach, ensuring resources are focused on addressing legitimate concerns.

Complaints about Herefordshire City of Sanctuary

In the first instance you must contact Herefordshire City of Sanctuary directly to raise your complaint.

If after the group's complaints procedure has been exhausted and the complainant is not satisfied they can raise the complaint with City of Sanctuary UK. However, **the complaint will only be investigated by City of Sanctuary UK if the complainant has sufficient evidence** that:-

- A group has acted contrary to the values of City of Sanctuary;
- What a group has done, or not done, is of such a serious nature that it has brought the City of Sanctuary name and reputation into disrepute.

Complaints should be sent to the [Chief Officer](#). If following an investigation, the Chief Officer finds sufficient evidence enough to justify the complaint they will refer the matter to the trustees to decide whether the group will be removed from the network.

[City of Sanctuary UK complaints policy](#)

Complaints about an awarded mainstream institution/organisation

Initial complaints will need to go to the organisation concerned. You may wish to check with Herefordshire City of Sanctuary whether the organisation concerned is an awarded institution/organisation and

whether this was processed by Herefordshire City of Sanctuary or City of Sanctuary UK.

If the organisation was awarded by City of Sanctuary UK, Herefordshire City of Sanctuary will notify the relevant member of staff at City of Sanctuary UK. The complaint will therefore be handled by City of Sanctuary UK using their complaints procedure.

If the organisation was awarded by Herefordshire City of Sanctuary the following process will be followed.

Herefordshire City of Sanctuary will only investigate complaints that relate to people seeking sanctuary in line with our associations objects. We use the Sanctuary Awards process to hold institutions and organisations accountable and will only investigate a complaint if the relevant award criteria are no longer being met.

In the first instance the person should raise the complaint directly with the Chair of the Management Committee without going into the formal complaint's procedure. Complaints will be handled informally by a member of the management committee in the first instance.

During the investigation the person handling the complaint will consider the following key questions:-

1. Has the organisation acted contrary to City of Sanctuary values?
2. Is what the organisation has done/not done of such a serious nature that it has brought the City of Sanctuary name and reputation into disrepute?

If following an investigation, the person handling the complaint has sufficient evidence to be able to answer these questions in the affirmative it will decide whether to revoke the organisation of its award. In this instance City of Sanctuary UK will be notified.

If there is insufficient evidence to answer the above questions the complaints handler will consider the following:-

3. Has the organisation continued to meet the award criteria?

If following the investigation, the person handling the complaint has sufficient evidence to conclude that the organisation has continued to meet the award criteria, then Herefordshire City of Sanctuary will work with the organisation to agree targets to be met within a reasonable period. In these instances, it is preferable that the matter is resolved informally between the organisation and Herefordshire City of Sanctuary.

If the organisation fails to make the improvements, or the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, the matter will be referred to City of Sanctuary UK who will decide whether it feels it is necessary to withdraw the award. If improvements are not met by the time the award is up for renewal the organisation will not be eligible for reaccreditation until it is able to prove it is now able to meet the criteria.

Confidentiality

- Complaints will be treated in confidence, and only those who need to know will be informed.
- However, in certain circumstances, information may need to be shared with external authorities (e.g., if the complaint relates to safeguarding concerns, criminal behaviour, or illegal activities).

Monitoring and Review

- The Complaints Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it is effective and continues to meet the needs of the organisation and those we serve.
- Data on complaints will be monitored to identify any trends or areas where improvements can be made.