



Complaints Policy of The Dulwich Society

Charity Registration Number: 234192

The Dulwich Society views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure everyone involved in managing The Dulwich Society knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are maintained or repaired.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about The Dulwich Society or its Officers or members. It may be about breaches of the Code of Conduct by Officers, Trustees or members of the Society.

Who Can Lodge a Complaint

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in The Dulwich Society and should be put in writing as set out below.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Trustees and the executive management committee.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Complaints Procedure of The Dulwich Society

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints

Complaints should be put in writing and sent to The Dulwich Society by e-mail to chairman@dulwichsociety.com or secretary@dulwichsociety.com.

Receiving and Managing Complaints

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

In all cases, the complaint information should be passed to The Society's Secretary within one week to record it in the Society's complaints register.

Resolving Complaints

Informal Procedure

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, or is forwarded to them with the permission of the complainant, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

The individual resolving the complaint informally should check that the complainant is satisfied that the complaint has been resolved and inform the Secretary who will record the outcome in the Society's complaints register.

Formal Procedure

Stage One

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally or is sufficiently serious to bypass this stage, the Vice Chair or Secretary will delegate an appropriate person or persons to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

The person investigating the complaint should reply to the complainant describing the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint, subject to the requirements of Data Protection legislation/GDPR and confidentiality.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request in writing that the complaint is reviewed at Executive Committee/Trustee level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chair.

The request for Executive Committee/Trustee level review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chair will delegate a suitably senior person or persons to investigate the facts of the case at Stage Two or may do so themselves. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed that the complaint has progressed to Stage 2 and given a fair opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. This should take place within 4 weeks of receipt of the complaint (or if this is not possible, a progress report should be provided).

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Executive Committee/Trustees decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

Termination of Membership

Where a complaint regarding a member of the Society is upheld which is sufficiently serious, (for example, involving a breach of the Code of Conduct), the person investigating the complaint may recommend termination of membership be considered. In such cases, the Society's Termination of Membership Procedure will be followed:

<https://www.dulwichsociety.com/pdf/termination-of-membership-procedure-20221114.pdf>

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Trustees may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage Two review.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate further action.

This policy will be published on the Society's web site www.dulwichsociety.com

The complaints register is held by the secretary@dulwichsociety.com