



National Star

Realising the aspirations
of people with disabilities

Working with National Star Complaints Policy (England)

1. About this Policy

- 1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about National Star's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of, the charity.
- 1.2 Requests for services or changes to services, comments, and suggestions, focus group and questionnaire feedback and disciplinary appeals are not considered as complaints and therefore do not fall within this policy.
- 1.3 National Star recognises that the Complaints Policy is separate from the charity's Grievance Policy and the charity's Disciplinary Policy, however it may be necessary during a complaint investigation to suspend the investigation pending the outcome of a grievance or disciplinary hearing.
- 1.4 National Star is committed to the provision of high-quality services. Complaints are viewed as an opportunity to review, and where appropriate, improve current service provision and support future high quality service development.
- 1.5 The aim of the policy is to ensure that any complaint received by the charity from a service user, parent or representative, employee, donor, potential donor, or any other external stakeholder is acted upon effectively and impartially within the processes defined within the Complaints procedure.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all service users, parents, representatives, employees, donors, potential donors, and other external stakeholders.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1 This policy is based on the firm belief that those who use National Star's services should be able to complain if any aspect of their services or activities do not achieve the high standards that the charity expects.
- 3.2 Complainants are entitled to raise a complaint in their preferred method of communication. Some complainants may choose to raise their complaint directly, whereas others may seek support from a relative or a friend.

3.3 All complaints will be assessed for the degree of confidentiality required to process the complaint. The Chief Executive may restrict the inclusion of additional senior staff to investigate if deemed highly sensitive.

3.4 National Star will ensure that the implementation of the complaints process is:

- Regularly monitored, evaluated and reviewed.
- Accessible to service users, beneficiaries, employees, parents / carers employers, visitors and other stakeholders.
- Contributes directly to quality assurance review and to the constant improvement of our services.
- Investigated in a systematic and non-confrontational manner.
- Assigned to designated employees who will have responsibility for resolving the complaint.

3.5 National Star maintains records of all formal complaints. This information will be evaluated and acted upon on a monthly basis by the Senior Management Team and reported to the Board of Governors and Board of Trustees quarterly. Where appropriate the Chair of Trustees and Governors will be informed of a complaint ahead of the quarterly meeting.

3.6 All complaints and any subsequent investigations relating to fundraising will be made available to the Fundraising Regulator on request.

3.7 Complaints relating to fundraising will be retained for at least 24 months from the date on which the complaint was made, except where data protection law requires that the information be put beyond use earlier than this (for example where the complainant within this timeframe requests that their information be destroyed).

4. Review

4.1 This policy will be reviewed in line with the policy schedule by the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Parent Forum, Student Union and Employee representative group.

Senior Manager responsible	Reviewed by	Approved by	Date approved	Next review date
Chief Executive	Lynette Barrett	P Styles (Trustees)	26/07/2023	June 2026

Procedures

Complaints Procedure (see flowchart at the end of this document):

5. Implementation

5.1 All employees have a responsibility to respond to queries and concerns appropriately to eliminate the need for people using our services to make complaints. Where a formal complaint has been made, employees have the responsibility to pass on complaints to the Chief Executive.

5.2 The Complaints Procedure is open to all people served by the charity, to include service users, parents, employers, neighbours, supporters and visitors.

5.3 National Star employees must use the internal Grievance Procedure, where the complaint is about a member of staff but can use the complaints procedure where the complaint is about a service that National Star is responsible for.

5.4 Process:

- The Chief Executive will review the complaint and acknowledge receipt.
- In the absence of the Chief Executive, an appropriate member of the Senior Management Team will stand in.
- Complaints regarding the Chief Executive will be sent to the Chair of Governors or the Chair of Trustees, leaving the other free to act in any other capacity that is required.
- As appropriate, formal complaints received by the Chief Executive will be notified to the Chairs of Trustees within 48 hours.
- Any complaints that NS receive in relation to the College GP will be forwarded to the GP's Practice Manager who will formally review and provide a response directly to the complainant.
- The Chief Executive will allocate a nominated senior manager to investigate the complaint. The senior manager will contact the person(s) making the complaint and investigate further or provide a response.

5.5 There is no standard complaints form as complainants should be able to complain using the method that best suits them. The person wishing to complain may well choose to use an 'Advocacy Service' to support them.

5.6 Where possible, the Nominated Senior Manager will be the Senior Manager responsible for the department /employee about which/whom complaint has been made.

5.7 The investigation will be conducted in strict accordance with the Complaints Policy.

5.8 All complainants will be advised of right to appeal if still dissatisfied.

5.9 The Appeal to the Chair of Governors / Trustees is the final stage of the Complaints Procedure within the charity.

6. Support, Advice and Communication

6.1 Parents, carers, donors, potential donors, and external stakeholders can download a copy of this policy and the Complaints Procedure from the charity's website.

6.2 Alternatively, a copy can be requested by emailing enquiries@nationalstar.org, or telephoning the charity's main reception on 01242 527631.

6.3 Service users can access this procedure on the charity's intranet (audio version is available).

6.4 Employees and service users can obtain advice and support in implementing this policy and associated procedures from the Emotional Wellbeing Team, National Safeguarding Lead, Student President, their Personalised Learning Coordinator and Line manager.

6.5 All service users and employees will be informed about the policy and associated procedures during induction and in the Student Handbook.

7. How are complaints received / made?

7.1 All queries/concerns should be addressed as a matter of urgency by employees at the charity. They will make every effort to ensure the concerns/issues are addressed or rectified in accordance with the wishes of the complainant.

7.2 All employees are to ensure that formal complaints are passed onto the Chief Executive as soon as possible within two working days of the complaint being made. This should be done via e-mail.

7.3 **Note:** All safeguarding concerns are to be referred to the safeguarding procedure.

7.4 The Chief Executive will record the details of the complaint and an acknowledgement will be sent within two working days to the person making the complaint. The Chief Executive will alert the Chair of Governors / Trustees to the complaint within two working days.

8. How is a complaint investigated?

8.1 The nominated senior manager will contact the complainant to ensure that there is clarity about the full nature of the complaint and that it has been understood appropriately by the charity.

8.2 This individual will then tell the complainant how they propose to conduct the investigation and the timeframe within which it will be reviewed. At this stage a date on which information about the results of the investigation will be provided to the complainant.

9. Who replies to the complainant?

9.1 The Chief Executive will review the investigation report prepared by the nominated senior manager and the draft reply to the complainant. The nominated senior manager will then convey the reply to the complainant by letter, or where appropriate they should arrange to meet. This response will be made no more than 14 working days after the complaint has been received but will always be handled as a matter of urgency.

10. What if the complainant remains dissatisfied?

10.1 If the complainant requires more information, the Chief Executive will respond by sending a further written response or by carrying out a further investigation.

10.2 If the complainant disagrees with the outcome, the Chief Executive will record details of the appeal and will then forward relevant papers to the Chair of Governors or the Chair of Trustees, (whoever is more appropriate).

11. How is an appeal handled?

11.1 The Chair of Governors / Trustees will consider the nature of the complaint and carry out a further investigation, supported by a senior manager who has not been involved in the initial investigation. They will then write to the complainant with the outcome or meet with the complainant face to face.

12. Who can the complainant refer to outside the charity?

12.1 Depending on the nature of the complaint the complainant can refer the complaint onto external bodies.

12.2 The Chief Executive or Chair of Governors / Trustees will give the complainant specific information relating to the identified complaint.

12.3 The key bodies will generally be the Local Authority, the Care Quality Commission, the Health and Safety Executive, the Charity Commission, the Fundraising Regulator, and Ofsted.

12.4 If the complaint relates to Fundraising, the complainant will be advised that any referral to the Fundraising Regulator should be made within two months of the response from the charity.



PRO-010 Complaints Process (V1.0)

