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## **Complaints Policy**

**2016/2017**

**Policy Approved:** Chair Diane James  
**Date:** 04/05/2016  
**Review Date:** 04/05/2017

# EXPIA Complaints Policy

## 1. Policy statement

Expia is committed to providing excellent customer service to everyone affected by its operation. As a charity we are firmly committed to serving the interests of the community and our customers and ensuring a process of continuous improvement.

We understand that things can sometimes go wrong and mistakes can be made, and understand the value of complaints in ensuring matters are addressed appropriately. This policy outlines the procedures to follow if you need to make a complaint and the internal procedures we follow to manage the process.

This policy will be available on our website and will form part of the induction process for all staff, volunteers and prisoners operating with us. A copy of the policy will be sent to anyone who needs to raise a complaint. The Board of trustees will be informed of any complaints.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of the complaints procedure are to ensure that:

- any complaints received are investigated promptly and at the appropriate level within the company;
- any person(s) making a complaint understand how their complaint will be dealt with;
- wherever possible, lessons are learned.

## 3. Definition of a customer

For the purposes of this procedure, ‘customers’ are defined as anyone who has any dealing with the organisation, excluding staff, volunteers and prisoners who are asked to raise issues with their Line Manager or under the internal grievance procedure (or prisoner complaints system.)

## 4. Misunderstandings

Even if customers do not regard a particular concern as a ‘complaint,’ we would still like to know about it as it may help us deal with something that may otherwise be overlooked. These small issues can often be corrected simply and quickly. We would like a positive outcome for our customers and understand that we need to learn from the process too.

Training will be provided for all staff and volunteers in dealing with reported issues and misunderstandings. This training will include an empowerment to immediately resolve any issue where our service levels fall short of expectations wherever possible. Members of staff and volunteers will record all issues dealt with in this way. The customer’s name will not be included. This will enable the local Manager

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and the Trustees to analyse complaints on a regular basis and advise regarding areas for development and continuous improvement.

### 5. The definition of a complaint

A 'complaint' is defined for the purpose of this procedure as a written record compiled by any customer of Expia at the Jailhouse Cafes. It is to be sent to an appropriate person within the company to be registered and the originator will receive an acknowledgement. The definition of 'complaint' does not include a comment provided by individuals asking for a simple remedy to a minor problem.

### 6. Integrity of the process

During the process of dealing with a complaint we will be as open and transparent as possible. People raising complaints will be given full information about the progress of their complaint except in the cases below:

- If the complaint involves questions about the actions or competencies of individual members of staff or trustees, other processes may subsume the complaints procedure and Expia may not be able to provide the person raising the complaint with all the relevant information. (For instance, employment legislation may prevent publication of the results of disciplinary processes.)
- The legal requirements of Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (Whistleblowers) may restrict the information that can be provided to persons raising complaints.

If either of these situations occurs, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will provide an explanation without disclosing any restricted information.

To ensure confidentiality, information about the progress of a complaint will only be provided to the person making the complaint.

### 7. Complaints process

- Customers making formal complaints are asked to write or email an explanation of the issue that has caused them to be dissatisfied. A complaint should also contain an explanation of what the person making the complaint requires to be done to resolve the issue.
- Complaints should be sent to Expia's Business Manager to ensure it is appropriately registered.
- An acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant with a registration number.
- The Business Manager will refer each complaint to an appropriate manager for the first review, unless such a person is specifically mentioned in the complaint, in which case it will be referred to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

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- Should a complaint be raised about a member of the Board, this may be forwarded to the Chair of the Board of Trustees at the registered address; Expia, IRC The Verne Learning Centre, Portland, Dorset DT5 1EQ.
- All correspondence about complaints will be handled sensitively and treated as confidential.
- When the first reviewer has considered the detail of a complaint, they will respond in writing to the complainant detailing any proposed remedial action within 28 days of receipt of the original complaint. If this is not possible, the Business Manager will provide an interim response within the 28-day time frame.
- A second review process will be detailed within the response.
- Should a second review be requested, the matter will be referred to a more senior person on the Board of Trustees.
- Following the second review, the complainant will be provided with a written response detailing any changes to the previously proposed remedial action if appropriate.
- Further progression of a complaint beyond the second review will depend upon the nature of the matter. The regulator of charities is the Charity Commission and details about how to complain about a charity are on their website or will be provided by Expia.
- If at any stage the customer making the complaint wants to stop a complaint from being progressed, they can do so in writing or by email to the Business Manager at Expia. Expia does reserve the right however to continue to investigate serious complaints in these circumstances.

### **8. Results of complaints**

The Board of Trustees will receive a report at least annually to show how many complaints have been received, the general nature of the problem and a list of remedial actions taken. The Board may, at their discretion, request further more detailed and more frequent reports. A summary statement will be produced within the annual report which will also be published on the website.

### **9. Committed to continuous improvement**

Expia is, by its very nature, a learning organisation and will develop further quality improvement procedures, which will include information received via the process of complaints.

In addition to the complaints process, which is clearly signposted within the Jailhouse Cafés, we also hold a comments book, which is frequently reviewed to assess both positive and negative feedback. This valuable tool encourages us to continue to develop what we are doing well and to address any areas of concern that are identified. We also monitor comments on social media and TripAdviser.

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### **10. Policy review**

The Board of Trustees shall regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in achieving the stated aims. This process shall be undertaken at least annually and shall include the review of each component of the policy.