

# External Complaints Policy and Procedure

The aim of this Policy and Procedure document is to achieve a resolution to concerns and complaints made by young people, parents and/or members of the general public. Most concerns can be resolved informally without any need to involve the Eikon Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or the Chair and Board of Trustees. However, if a concern becomes a complaint, then this three-stage process will be used. It is not usually possible to jump stages in the procedure, as it is a fundamental principle that each party must be allowed the opportunity to resolve the complaint before it is escalated to the next stage. However, where the complaint constitutes an allegation against a staff member, a formal investigation will be undertaken in accordance with Section 11 of the Eikon Safeguarding Procedure, Managing Allegations or Concerns Towards Staff, rather than by following the stages within this procedure. If it is unclear whether the complaint constitutes an allegation, it should be referred to Eikon DSL for guidance.

Any complaint raised will be treated seriously and courteously. Anyone making a complaint will be given the opportunity to make their concerns known and Eikon staff must be given time to properly investigate them for the matter to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. It is important that all involved have confidence in this procedure and know that the matter will be investigated impartially and dealt with as quickly as possible.

Resolving concerns and/or complaints involves balancing the rights and responsibilities of young people, parents, members of the general public and Eikon staff; there should be recognition that all involved have responsibilities.

Where investigation of a complaint at any stage requires contacting a member of staff who is absent from work due to annual leave or sick leave, the Eikon manager will notify the complainant that no resolution will be available until the staff member has returned from leave. Where the staff member is absent from work due to maternity leave, the Eikon manager investigating the complaint will follow the timescales as laid out below, and will contact the individual staff member concerned to ensure that they have the opportunity to respond to the complaint in a fair procedure.

The investigation of a complaint will not deal with employee disciplinary matters. If, however, during the course of considering a complaint, it is concluded that disciplinary procedures should be initiated, the line manager will consider this as a separate action in accordance with Eikon's Employment Policy, Section 2 – Disciplinary Procedure.

Anonymous complaints, whilst difficult to manage and resolve, will be recorded and referred to the Eikon Head of People and Performance, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Chair of Trustees in the same way as other complaints. The fact that a complaint is from an anonymous source should not in itself justify a decision not to investigate the matter, nor should it rule out referral to other procedures as appropriate, for example, safeguarding.

### Informal Resolution – Stage 1

In the first instance, any caller should be asked to clearly identify that they are making a formal complaint so that the matter is given prompt and appropriate action by the Eikon staff member receiving the call. The member of staff receiving the call will immediately pass the complaint to the manager of the relevant Eikon service against which the complaint has been made. If this is not known, the matter should in the first instance be referred to Eikon's Head of People and Performance (see contact details in Appendix 1). On no account will the complaint be passed to any other member of Eikon staff. Where the complaint is received in writing or by email, the Eikon manager receiving the complaint will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 1 working day. The Eikon manager receiving the complaint will consider what the complainant has to say and try to resolve the complaint promptly. The Eikon manager will respond in full to the complainant in writing within 10 working days of receiving the complaint to confirm the outcome of their investigation. It is anticipated that most issues will be resolved at this stage.

### Formal Investigation – Stage 2

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision reached at Stage 1, they should respond to the Eikon investigating manager within 10 working days. The matter will then be referred to Eikon's Head of People and Performance (see contact details in Appendix 1) to decide whether to:

- Refer the complaint back to the Eikon manager with a request to reconsider all or specific parts of the complaint.
- Arrange for an Eikon manager who is not responsible for the service / staff member about which the complaint has been made, to investigate the matter independently. This manager will usually need to discuss the complaint with the complainant so that they fully understand the issues and what resolution the complainant is looking for. Having investigated, the Eikon manager will present their findings to the Head of People and Performance.
- Take no further action if it is considered that the complaint has been properly dealt with at Stage 1.

Head of People and Performance will respond to the complainant in writing within 20 working days of their receipt of the complaint to confirm the outcome of the investigation. The Head of People and Performance will ensure that the CEO is informed and kept updated with the nature and progress of the complaint.

### Review of the Formal Investigation – Stage 3

If the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, they should respond to the Eikon Head of People and Performance within 10 working days. The matter will then be referred to Eikon's Chair of Trustees (see contact details in Appendix 1) and the CEO informed. The Chair of Trustees may commission a further, independent review of the investigation and recommend one of the following:

- No further action is taken

- Changes to the initial recommendations made
- In exceptional cases, mediation or external investigation.

The Chair of Trustees will respond to the complainant in writing within 20 working days of their receipt of the complaint to confirm the outcome of their investigation and will inform the CEO of their final decision.

**Staff:** refers to anyone working for the organisation, in a paid or voluntary capacity and in part or full-time roles including consultants, contractors, agency staff and students

### Version Control

Version	Date	Changes
V1	February 2018	Updated due to organisational changes following mergers
V2	October 2020	Updated for organisational changes
V3	December 2021	Full update to reflect current reality, processes and procedures
V3.1	May 2022	Reformatted JT
V3.2	July 2023	Rebranded CPH