

Complaints Policy and Procedure

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Policy Statement

This policy statement outlines MAP's commitment to managing and resolving complaints in a fair, transparent, and timely manner. We highly value strong relationships with parents, carers, students, referring organisations, visitors and our wider community, and we aim to address all concerns promptly and professionally.

MAP Charity welcomes all feedback—positive or negative—and uses it to improve our practice, strengthen communication, and support our community. We are committed to taking all concerns seriously, ensuring that all staff and trustees understand and adhere to this policy. We

commit to regularly reviewing our policies and procedures.

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1. Who can make a complaint?

This Complaints Procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who attend MAP Education. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to MAP Charity about the provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures, we will use this Complaints Procedure.

2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the Complaints Procedure. MAP Charity takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Head of Department or Project Director will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Head of Department or Project Director will refer you to another staff member. The member

of staff may be more senior, but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally, if the informal process has not addressed their concern appropriately. In this case, MAP Charity will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this Complaints Procedure.

3. Anonymous complaints

MAP Charity will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However the Project Director and Board of Trustees, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

4. Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

MAP Charity will maintain records of complaints for 5 years following the closure of complaints.

5. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of services by MAP Charity, other than complaints that are dealt with by referring organisations (education) or under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
- Admissions to schools - Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	Concerns about school admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with complaints.children@leeds.gov.uk
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled in accordance with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding lado@leeds.gov.uk or contact Duty and Advice – Report a child protection concern
Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions .
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our volunteers and employees, including temporary

	staff and contractors.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with in accordance with MAP Charity's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the MAP's internal disciplinary procedures. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the Complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use MAP Charity's premises or facilities	Providers should have their own Complaints Procedure to deal with complaints about the service. Please contact them directly.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example, referring organisations, the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those bodies have completed their investigations.

If a Complainant commences legal action against MAP Charity in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the Complaints Procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

6. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, MAP Charity wants to resolve the complaint fairly and transparently. We may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation,
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better,
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur,
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made,
- an undertaking to review policies or procedures in light of the complaint,
- an apology.

7. Withdrawal of a complaint

If a Complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

8. How to raise a concern or make a complaint – Informal Stage

Most concerns can be resolved informally and should be raised with either the Head of Department or Project Director.

All parties are expected to engage fully in the informal stage to resolve concerns wherever possible.

MAP Charity Education works in partnership with the referring organisation for each young person accessing our education provision. A concern or complaint about MAP Education can be raised with the referring organisation. For example, a young person's home school or academy.

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to MAP Charity about the provision of facilities or services.

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone.

We will consider complaints in relation to MAP Education, made outside of term time, to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

MAP Charity will respond as soon as possible to an informal concern or complaint, either in person, by phone, or in writing.

Staff will record details and any actions taken, and confirm outcomes in writing.

MAP Charity may contact relevant individuals, hold discussion and arrange meetings to assist with enquiries.

Updates will normally be provided within 2 weeks (or 10 school days if Education related.)

Complainants should not approach individual Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Informal complaints about MAP Education provision should be made in the first instance to the Head of Education in person, by telephone or in writing via the education@mapcharity.org email address.

Informal complaints about MAP staff (except the Project Director) should be made in the first instance to the Project Director via the admin@mapcharity.org email address. Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential, FAO the Project Director'.

Informal complaints that involve, or are about, the Project Director should be addressed to the Board of Trustees via the admin@mapcharity.org email address. Please mark as 'Private and Confidential, FAO The Board of Trustees'.

Informal complaints about the Board of Trustees should be addressed to the Project Director via the admin@mapcharity.org email address, who will enlist the help of another organisation to investigate the complaint. Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential, FAO the Vice Chair/Chair/Project Director'.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the education@mapcharity.org or admin@mapcharity.org email address. You can also ask third-party organisations like Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required to enable Complainants to access and complete this Complaints Procedure. This could include

providing information in alternative formats, assisting Complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

9. Stage 1

Should you not be satisfied with the outcome of any informal efforts to resolve the complaint, you may wish to escalate the complaint formally. Formal complaints must be made to the Project Director (unless they are about the Project Director). This may be done in person, in writing to the admin@mapcharity.org email address (preferably on the complaint form) or via telephone.

The Project Director will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within a week or five school days (education).

Within this response, the Project Director will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the Complainant would like to see. The Project Director can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Project Director may delegate the investigation to another member of MAP's management team, but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Project Director (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish,
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Project Director will provide a formal written response within three weeks or fifteen school days (education).

If the Project Director is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the Complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide an explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions MAP Charity will take to resolve the complaint.

The Project Director will advise the Complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Project Director, or a member of the Board of Trustees, a suitably skilled member of the management team or a Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

10. Stage 2

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – managed by members of the Board of Trustees' Complaints Committee, which will be formed of three impartial Trustees.

If the complaint is about a majority percentage of the Board of Trustees, Stage 2 will be managed by senior members of MAP staff and if necessary, individuals from other organisations.

This is the final stage of MAP Charity's Complaints Procedure and reviews the process of the investigation at Stage 1, rather than the complaint itself.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the admin@mapcharity.org email address within two weeks of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

MAP Charity will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt in writing within a week or five school days (education).

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision, they will be sensitive to the Complainant's needs.

MAP Charity will write to the Complainant to inform them of the date of any meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within four weeks or twenty school days (education) of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, MAP Charity will provide an anticipated date and keep the Complainant informed.

If the Complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, MAP Charity will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the Complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The Complaints Committee will consist of at least three Trustees with no prior involvement with the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If fewer than three Trustees from MAP Charity are available, MAP Charity will source an additional independent person from another organisation to make up the Committee.

If the Complainant is invited to attend a meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this Complaints Procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least one week or five school days (education) before the meeting, MAP Charity will:

- confirm and notify the Complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the Complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least or

five working or school days (education) before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least three working days or three school days (education) before the date of the meeting. The Committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the prior informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from the informal stage of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before records of meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The Committee will consider the procedure undertaken at Stage 1 and any additional evidence presented.

The Committee will:

- issue a final outcome on the efficacy of the informal and stage 1 processes undertaken.
- decide on whether any appropriate action needs to be taken.
- where appropriate, recommend reviews or changes to MAP Charity's policies or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

11. Further information

Charities in England and Wales are registered and regulated by The Charity Commission. The Charity Commission will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by MAP Charity. They may consider whether MAP Charity is accountable, well run and meets its legal obligations.

The Fundraising Regulator is the independent regulator of charitable fundraising in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Fundraising Regulator may investigate complaints about fundraising where the fundraising has caused harm or has the potential to cause harm, they may consider whether there has been a breach of the Code of Fundraising Practice.

12. Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

MAP Charity is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact Complainants have with MAP Charity. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect them from it, including behaviour that is abusive, offensive or threatening.

MAP Charity defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the Complainant's contact with MAP Charity, such as, if the Complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the

outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance,

- refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process,
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Complaints Procedure,
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the Complaints Procedure or with good practice,
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on,
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, including seeking to have them replaced,
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds,
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed),
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where MAP Charity's Complaints Procedure has been fully and properly implemented,
- seeks an unrealistic outcome,
- makes excessive demands on staff time by frequent, lengthy or complicated contact regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with,
- uses threats to intimidate,
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence,
- knowingly provides falsified information,
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with MAP Charity that relates to their complaint while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Where possible, Heads of Department, Project Directors or Trustees will discuss any concerns with the Complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, MAP Charity will write to the Complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.

For Complainants who excessively contact MAP Charity, causing significant disruption, we may specify communication methods and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months or sooner if necessary. We reserve the right to cease contact with the Complainant if communication plans are not adhered to.

13. Managing complaint campaigns

- send a template response to all Complainants
- publish a single response on their website.

Your name:
Young person's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the young person (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Email address:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at MAP Charity about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

15. Vexatious Contact

Vexatious contact refers to obsessive, repetitive, or unreasonable contact or correspondence designed to harass, cause distress, or intentionally waste time. It can include abusive, derogatory or threatening language, repeated complaints about already-settled issues and excessive contact volume that hinders normal operations. Vexatious contact can take place in meetings, in person, on the phone, via text message, via social media and in written correspondence. Attempting to pursue the same issue with multiple staff members simultaneously, or copying in external parties may also constitute vexatious contact.

Once contact from an individual has been identified as vexatious actions to manage this may include:

Limiting channels of communication: Restricting the individual to email, postal mail or telephone contact only, or designating a single, specific member of staff to handle all their correspondence.

Setting time limits: Restricting telephone calls to specific days and times.

Banning unannounced visits: Restricting visits, strictly by appointment only or removing permission to visit.

Ignoring further contact: Informing the individual that further contact on a specific, exhausted topic may not be acknowledged or replied to.