

GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

Statement of intent

Heartfulness UK (the “Charity”) are committed to providing a high quality and accessible service to anyone who wishes to use our Heartfulness meditation services. As part of this commitment we have a complaints/grievance procedure to allow those to whom we provide these services to make suggestions for improvement or to raise any grievance, complaint or concern they may have. This complaints/ grievance procedure can also be used by anyone connected to the Charity, including any trustee, trainer, mediator, volunteer, zonal and Heartspot coordinator.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Charity’s other policies:

- Safeguarding policy for children;
- Safeguarding policy for vulnerable adults;
- Anti-bullying/ harassment policy;
- Heartfulness Code of Conduct for volunteers; and Guidance for meditators;
- Conflicts of interest;
- Data protection and recording information;

Any concerns relating to Safeguarding matters will be dealt with according to the separate procedures outlined in our Safeguarding Policies.

Stage 1 Complaint - Complaint to the Charity

Where the complainer is a member of the public who is not connected with the Charity

- The complainer should raise their concerns with the Asst Secretary for Legal Affairs on asst-secretary.legal@heartfulness.uk
- If the Asst Secretary for Legal Affairs is not available or is implicated in the complaint, then the complainer should raise their concern with the UK Company Secretary on uk.secretary@heartfulness.org
- We will acknowledge and provide a response to your complaint within 20 working days of receiving it. We expect to be able to resolve most complaints within that timeframe, but if we need to conduct a more in depth investigation, we will aim to provide a full response within 25 working days. If we are unable to meet that deadline due to exceptional circumstances, we will let you know and when you can expect a response.

Heartfulness UK

When the complainer is connected with the Charity

- Given the nature of our Charity, in the event of a trustee / trainer / mediator / volunteer / trainer / zonal or Heartspot coordinator wishing to raise a grievance/complaint, it is our preference for the grievance to be discussed informally in the first instance with the individual(s) concerned and if possible, resolved in an amicable manner according to Heartfulness principles. We would expect all complaints raised in this way to be resolved within 25 working days.
- We understand however that the complainer may not wish to raise their complaint in this informal way. The complainer can if they prefer instead raise their concerns with the Safeguarding Officer on safeguarding.equality@heartfulness.uk
- If the Safeguarding Officer is not available or is implicated in the complaint, then the complainer should raise their concern with the Asst Secretary for Legal Affairs on asst-secretary.legal@heartfulness.uk
- We will acknowledge and provide a response to your complaint within 20 working days of receiving it. We expect to be able to resolve most complaints within that timeframe, but if we need to conduct a more in depth investigation, we will aim to provide a full response within 25 working days. If we are unable to meet that deadline due to exceptional circumstances, we will let you know and when you can expect a response.

STAGE 2 Complaint - Complaint to the trustees

This procedure is appropriate for all complaints, regardless of whether or not the complainer is connected with the Charity.

- If you are not happy with the decision that you receive, you will be given the opportunity to raise the issue with the chair of the trustees who will arrange, as appropriate, an investigation to take place and respond normally within 20 working days.
- If at this point the chair considers that it would be more helpful to refer the complaint to mediation rather than carry out an investigation, then he or she can suggest this to the complainer and seek their consent to proceed in this way. Details of the mediation process are provided under stage 3 of this procedure.
- We will seek to deal with all complaints in an efficient and proportionate way. Should an investigation be appropriate we will determine how that is to be carried out and by whom. At stage 1, ordinarily the investigation is carried out by the Safeguarding Officer or Asst Secretary for Legal Affairs. At stage 2, an investigation panel will be convened which is made up of at least one trustee.

STAGE 3 Complaint -

Complainers who remain unsatisfied by the complaint response can decide if appropriate to refer the complaint to mediation, facilitated by the Charity.

An independent third party or mediator can sometimes help resolve grievance issues once it has reached a stage 3 complaint. In some cases, mediation can also be helpful before it is necessary to invoke the stage 2 investigation of the complaints procedure. Mediation is a voluntary process where the mediator helps two or more people in dispute to attempt to reach an agreement. Any agreement comes from those in dispute, not from the mediator. The mediator is not there to judge, to say one person is right and the other wrong, or to tell those involved in the mediation what they should do. The mediator is in charge of the process of seeking to resolve the problem but not the outcome.

The complainer can also if they wish, consider in appropriate cases making a complaint to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) or the Charity Commission (England and Wales).

Complaint outcome

If a trustee/mediator/volunteer/trainer/zonal or Heartspot coordinator is found to have breached any of the Charity's policies, codes of conduct or guidance for mediators, this can result in the following steps being taken, depending upon the nature and severity of the breach:

1. Asking the trustee/ mediator/volunteer/trainer/zonal or Heartspot coordinator/trustee to provide a formal apology, which may be given in person, or in writing, or both.
2. Requiring a trustee/ volunteer/trainer/mediator/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator/ to undertake such further training as may be required.
3. Issuing a trustee/ volunteer/trainer/mediator/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator with a written warning from the Secretary. This warning will set out the corrective steps that the Secretary will expect them to take to remedy the breach and may also require them to issue a formal apology or undertake further training as above. The warning will set out a timeline for taking this remedial action.
4. The Secretary team and/or trustees not subject to the complaint can remove the right to be a volunteer/ mediator /zonal or Heartspot coordinator and recommend the removal of a trainer or trustee at their discretion if they consider it to be in the best interests of the Charity to do so, or in the event that the volunteer/trainer/zonal or Heartspot coordinator/trustee in question continues to breach the Charity's policies or does not carry out the remedial steps set out above to the satisfaction of the trustees.
5. In the event of any serious, continuing breach of the Charity's policies, the Charity reserves the right to restrict any person's participation in the Charity's activities.