

# John Ellerman Foundation

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### Introduction

John Ellerman Foundation's aim is to advance the wellbeing of people, society and the natural world. One of our core values is to be a responsive funder, listening and responding to what applicants, grant-holders and our wider stakeholder network judge is important. We believe that we must be accessible and accountable to applicants, grant-holders, and other external stakeholders. This publicly available Policy is aimed at applicants and grant-holders that may wish to raise a complaint about their application to us or their grant with us, respectively. This policy aims to:

- Provide clear guidance on how to submit a complaint to us
- Outline how complaints are processed and resolved
- Explain how we learn from complaints

We have also made a commitment to accountability as one of the four pillars of our strategy for 2022-25, and this Policy is for work happening internally and externally. This includes our involvement in the Foundation Practice Rating and our membership of IVAR's '[Open and Trusting](#)' grantmaking initiative, which commits us to finding ways for organisations to raise challenges safely in their relationship with us.

### How to submit a complaint

1. In the first instance, we encourage applicants and grant-holders who have a concern or complaint to raise it informally with the relevant member of staff – for applicants this is usually the member of the team you have been liaising with and for grant-holders this is usually the member of staff who manages your grant. If you are unsure who you should speak to, then you should contact our Senior Grants Manager. The phone numbers and email addresses for the whole team are publicly available on our website [here](#).
2. Formal complaints should be put in writing and sent via email to our Senior Grants Manager, Kate Hitchcock, on [kate@ellerman.org.uk](mailto:kate@ellerman.org.uk). As we are a hybrid-working team, sending an email is recommended as it is likely to receive a quicker response. If you prefer to submit your complaint via post, it can be sent to John Ellerman Foundation, Aria House, 23 Craven Street, London, WC2N 5NS. If your complaint relates to the Senior Grants Manager, then you can direct your complaint to the Director, Sufina Ahmad, on [sufina@ellerman.org.uk](mailto:sufina@ellerman.org.uk).
3. If emailing, please include 'Complaint' in the title so that we can act on it more rapidly. If you receive an out-of-office reply that indicates the Senior Grants Manager will be away for more than one week, please forward your email to the Director.
4. To help us understand and respond to your complaint, please include the following in your email:
  - What the complaint is about
  - Who it involves – e.g. staff member(s), Trustee(s) and any other people involved
  - When the issue you are complaining about occurred and whether it is still happening
  - Whether you have spoken to anyone at the Foundation informally already
  - Your name, phone number, email address, and postal address (if relevant)
  - Any other information that may be relevant

## **How complaints are processed and resolved**

1. The Senior Grants Manager will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 48 hours if received via email, or one week if sent via post. You will be advised of who is dealing with your complaint and when you should expect a detailed response. This person may be in touch with you to gather any additional information required to properly respond to your concerns.
2. All complaints will be handled sensitively, sharing information only with those who need to know, and in line with our Data Protection and Whistleblowing Policies.
3. We aim to respond within four weeks of receiving the complaint. We will explain how we have investigated your complaint, any action taken, and any next steps. If we are unable to provide a full response within this time, we will explain this to you and let you know when you can expect to hear back.
4. Concerns will normally be dealt with internally in the first instance. If the matter is serious, it will be reported to the appropriate authority. This may include obtaining advice from a lawyer or auditor. The matter will also be referred to the police or the Charity Commission, where appropriate.
5. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you can inform your named contact that you would like to appeal the decision. Appeals will be dealt with by the Director and/or Board of Trustees, as per steps one and two.

## **How we learn from complaints**

We welcome the opportunity to learn when things go wrong, or if we have not met the standards laid out in our strategy and values. Complaints will be logged, and when a complaint is closed it will be reflected on by the Grants Team, including the Director, for lessons learned and any updates that might be required to our processes. The full annual log of complaints will be reviewed in more detail in January of each year. Key points and lessons will be shared with Trustees at Board meetings, and when appropriate, with the wider staff team.

The Foundation also commits to:

- Ensure an ongoing commitment to preventing, detecting and resolving wrongdoing, risk or malpractice affecting others.
- Make all staff and Trustees aware of this policy and procedures.
- Deal with concerns seriously, promptly and in confidence, with the Board being informed as needed.
- Support the complainant throughout the process.
- Protect the complainant from reprisals.
- Discipline anyone who victimises those who feel they are raising genuine concerns, or anyone who raises an untrue allegation maliciously.
- Prosecute those committing fraud or other crimes.

## **Further information**

If you are not a grant-holder or applicant, but wish to complain about an organisation we have funded, GOV.UK provides free, independent advice on complaining about a charity: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>. If you are not a grant-holder or applicant, but wish to complain about your experience of working with us, then you can also make a complaint using the process outlined above. Staff (including interim staff) and Trustees may also wish to review our Fraud and Whistleblowing Policy, which outlines how to raise genuine concerns they may have.

## **Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years.