Parks for London

Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

The London Parks and Green Spaces Forum is a registered charity and trades as Parks for London. For the purposes of this policy the organisation will be referred to as 'Parks for London', 'our', or 'we'.

Parks for London aims to provide high quality services, products, and resources to its' supporters, other organisations in the green space sector, and those that we undertake work for.

We are always exploring how we can develop and progress as an organisation to provide the best support to London's land managers and owners and others in the sector. We hope that we are fulfilling our aim of providing high-quality services, products, and resources, if we are not, then we would like to know about it.

All complaints will be taken seriously so that we can improve the way we work and maintain the highest standards.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the policy are to:

- define a complaint
- make it clear how to raise a complaint
- explain the complaints process and who will deal with the complaint
- and explain what to do in the case of a dispute.

3. Definition of a complaint

A complaint is different from an enquiry or a request. A complaint is when someone in receipt of our services or products, contacts us to tell it that they are dissatisfied with either with a service or product provided, actions or lack of action, or other faults.

4. What this policy does not cover

4.1 Parks for London can only deal with complaints directly connected to its services and products; we cannot for example deal with a complaint about the state of a particular park.

4.2 Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will not deal with a complaint more than 12 months after its occurrence.

4.3 On a small number of occasions we may withdraw the complaints procedure from a complainant whose behaviour is unreasonable (for example if someone keeps raising the same complaint in different ways), or we may have to restrict contact. In such circumstances, we will explain to the complainant or their advocate, in writing, why such action is being taken.

5. Making a complaint

5.1 Complaints can be made by email or letter, see section 12 for contact details. If you would like to make a complaint by other means, please contact us to let us know how you would like to make your complaint, so we can assist you further.

5.2 So that complaints can be dealt with quickly; we would ask that the complaint details be kept as short and to the point as is reasonably possible. Any evidence provided should be of a reasonable length. Excessively long submissions will not be considered and will be returned to the complainant.

5.3 Complaints can be made via an advocate(s) providing they have the complainant's consent.

5.4 Complaints will also be accepted where the client cannot complain unaided and cannot give consent because they lack capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the representative is acting in the client's best interests, for example, where the matter complained about, if true, would be detrimental to the client.

5.5 Anonymous complaints will be investigated, and the outcome reported on the Parks for London website.

6. Who will deal with the complaints

6.1 Generally, complaints will be handled by the Executive Director

6.2 However if the complaint concerns the Executive Director, the Chair of the board of trustees will deal with the complaint.

7. What happens when a complaint is received?

7.1 Parks for London will acknowledge the complaint and confirm who will deal with it. We aim to do this within five working days of receiving the complaint. We will always endeavour to resolve a complaint or issue quickly and effectively, as outlined below:

Stage 1: The Executive Director (ED) will consider the complaint and may contact the complainant to discuss the complaint and ensure that the issues are fully understood. Following the investigation the ED will write to the complainant with the result, we aim to do this within ten working days of receiving the complaint.

Stage 2: If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at this point, the complainant will have a period of up to 25 working days to inform the Executive Director and explain why the complaint is still outstanding. The Chair will then look at the issue and will work with the complainant to arrive at an appropriate outcome.

This may involve a meeting, to which the complainant can bring an advocate or friend to offer support, but the advocate or friend will not be able to act in a legal capacity. Any papers

prepared for the meeting will be copied to the complainant and their comments, if any, can be submitted for consideration ahead of the meeting. We will aim to resolve stage two within 20 working days of the original complaint. The Chair's decision is final.

7.2 There may be circumstances where the above timescales must be extended, either because the Executive Director or Chair are on leave, or it is not possible to arrange a meeting that is convenient for all parties within the timescales. In general, we would always hope to resolve issues within the policy timescales.

7.4 On rare occasions Parks for London may decide to shorten the process under the following circumstances:

- if the complaint is being pursued unreasonably (such as under the circumstances mentioned in 4.3 above)
- where the complainant cannot be specific about what they wish Parks for London to do, and we can add nothing further
- if the issue raised through the complaint is outside of our control, or changing a decision is outside of our control
- if legal action is taken, the process will be stopped to deal with the legal action.

The above list is not exhaustive, we will always explain to the complainant, in writing, why the process is being shortened.

8. Putting things right

8.1 Parks for London will take necessary measures to put things right where we are at fault and make a formal apology. Where a complaint results in a change to a policy or a service, we will inform the complainant of the change.

8.2 Closure of a complaint may take place before a matter is completely resolved, and Parks for London may make a commitment to act within a clear timescale.

9. Safeguarding complaints

If a complaint is connected to a safeguarding issue, we would refer the complainant to our safeguarding policy.

10. Training

As part of the staff induction process, Parks for London will ensure that its staff are aware of its complaints policy and processes; as well as our commitment to provide high quality services, products and resources to our supporters and others. We want those we work with to feel valued, supported and receive excellent customer care.

Trustees will also be made aware of the complaints policy as part of the trustee induction process.

The policy is available via the Parks for London website.

11. Monitoring and reporting

All complaints will be recorded, and progress will be monitored. Any changes in practices will be reported to the board of trustees.

This policy will be reviewed every three years, unless there is a reason to review it before.

12. Contacts

Complaints can be:

- emailed to Ed Stannard, Executive Director at: ed.stannard@parksforlondon.org.uk
- emailed to the Chair of the board of trustees, where it is applicable, at: Chair@parksforlondon.org.uk
- sent by letter and addressed to: Parks for London, PO Box 77664, London, SE6 9RQ.