

# Ainsdale Lunch and Leisure Complaints Policy and Procedure

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### 1. Introduction

Ainsdale Lunch and Leisure (ALL) views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure that everyone at ALL knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure that all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, whenever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

### 2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of ALL.

### 3. Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in ALL. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing. This policy does not cover complaints from staff who should use ALL's Disciplinary and Grievance procedures detailed in their Terms and Conditions of Employment.

### 4. Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

### 5. Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees.

### 6. Review

Next Review Due: November 2026

# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## 7. Introduction

The emphasis in this Complaints Procedure is on informality, with the object of solving problems quickly, simply and fairly. It is hoped that the great majority of issues can be settled amicably at the First Stage, and that complaints will only exceptionally reach the Second Stage.

Staff of Ainsdale Lunch and Leisure will respond promptly to written or verbal complaints and will also expect service users to keep to an agreed timetable for pursuing a complaint.

Constructive criticism, made through questionnaire surveys or in discussion with staff, is always welcome as help towards improving our services.

## 8. Publicised Contact Details for Complaints.

Written complaints may be sent to ALL by post (ALL, Ainsdale Methodist Church, Liverpool Road, Southport, PR8 3NQ) or by email ([gm@ainsdalelunchandleisure.org.uk](mailto:gm@ainsdalelunchandleisure.org.uk)).

Verbal complaints may be made by phone (01704 574838) or in person at the ALL Office.

## 9. First Stage (Informal Complaint)

Complainants should initially make the complaint either verbally or in writing to the ALL General Manager making it clear that they wish it to be treated as a complaint.

The object of this First Stage is to resolve problems quickly and simply with the minimum of formality. The ALL General Manager has discretion as to how the complaint is investigated and determined.

If the complaint has been made in writing, the ALL General Manager will respond in writing usually within two weeks of receipt. The ALL General Manager will keep a record of each complainant, the nature of the complaint and how it was resolved and will bring any relevant issues to the Board of Trustees attention.

## 10. Second Stage (Formal Complaint)

If the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily by the ALL General Manager, the complainant may make a formal complaint, in writing, to the ALL Trustees. Only in exceptional circumstances will the ALL Trustees consider any complaint that has not been through the first stage process.

The complaint will initially be considered by a minimum of two Trustees agreed by the Board. If they come to the conclusion that the complaint has already been fairly settled at an earlier stage, or that the complaint is trivial, or wholly lacking in merit or substance, they may dismiss the complaint, and advise the complainant of the reasons for the decision. The Trustees will respond to a letter of complaint usually within ten working days, with as full a response as possible.

If the Trustees come to the conclusion that there is substance in the complaint, the Trustees may either:

- i. Seek to resolve the complaint, in discussion with the ALL General Manager or
- ii. Submit a report on all the material facts to the full Board of Trustees, who will resolve the matter.

The Trustees will notify the complainant of this decision, in writing, usually within twenty working days of receipt of the original written complaint or within five working days after the next board meeting if the complaint has been referred to the Board of Trustees. Details of the complaint and its resolution will be reported to the next meeting of the ALL Board of Trustees.

## **11. Harassment**

Any allegation that an employee is harassing or discriminating against a Volunteer, Service User or Organisation will be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary arrangements provided under the terms of their contract of employment.

## **12. Disciplinary Action**

There shall be no disciplinary or other adverse implications for a Volunteer, Service User or Organisation who makes a complaint or allegation providing they act in good faith, within the law, and not vexatious, or with malice, and in accordance with established procedures including those above. Victimisation of a complainant and deterring anyone from making a proper complaint are serious disciplinary offences.

## **13. Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Board of Trustees may vary the procedure for good reason as necessary.