COMPLAINTS POLICY

Kids on Track views all complaints as an opportunity to develop and improve our services, as well as aiming to put things right for the person that has made the complaint. The Policy aims:

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

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Kids on Track.

Confidentiality

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

1.0 Complaints Procedure

Stage one

Complaints about an activity:

- The relevant Programme Co-ordinator will discuss the matter informally with the parent or carer concerned and aim to reach a satisfactory resolution.

Complaints about an individual volunteer:

If appropriate the parent will be encouraged to discuss the matter with the volunteer concerned. If the parent feels that this is not appropriate, the matter will be discussed with the relevant Programme Co-ordinator who will then discuss the complaint with the volunteer and try to reach a satisfactory resolution.

Stage two

If it is impossible to reach a satisfactory resolution to the complaint through informal discussion, the parent or carer should put their complaint in writing to the CEO of Kids on Track, who will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the letter within 7 days.
- Investigate the matter and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days.
- Send a full response in writing, to all relevant parties, including details of any recommended changes to be made to the charity's practices or policies as a result of the complaint.
- Meet relevant parties to discuss the charity's response to the complaint, either together or on an individual basis.
- If child protection issues are raised, the DSL will refer the situation to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and follow the procedures of the Safeguarding Children Policy. If a criminal act may have been committed, the CEO will contact the police.

If you feel your concern has not been handled properly, you may escalate it to the Chair of Trustees. You may also raise it externally, and you will be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 where the legal conditions are met. External routes include:

- **Charity Commission** (for serious wrongdoing in charities)
- **LADO** or local children's services
- Relevant regulators, such as Ofsted

Whistleblowing

This section enables anyone working for or with Kids on Track to raise serious concerns about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice, including concerns about the safety of children, without fear or reprisal. It sits alongside our Complaints Policy and Safeguarding Policy. Complaints about the service you personally receive should follow the complaints procedure above: whistleblowing is for concerns about a wider wrongdoing or risk.

This applies to all employees, volunteers, trustees, contractors, agency workers and students or interns on placement.

Any concern can be raised that you reasonably believe is in the public interest, including:

A child being harmed, at risk of harm or not being properly protected.

Failure to follow safeguarding procedures, or attempts to cover up safeguarding concerns.

Abuse of position of trust or inappropriate behaviour towards children.

Criminal activity, fraud, bribery or misuse of charitable funds.

Breach of legal obligations or Charity Commission requirements.

Health and safety risks.

Bullying, discrimination or harassment.

Deliberate concealment of any of the above.

You do not need proof. You only need to have reasonable belief that your concern is true.

5. How to raise a concern

- **Step 1:** Speak or write to the relevant activity coordinator or the DSL.
- **Step 2:** If you feel unable to do this, or the concern involves them, contact Tor Strong CEO, or the Chair of Trustees Sara Falk at sfalk@kidsontrack.org.uk

- **Step 3:** If the concern involves the CEO or Chair, or you believe it has not been dealt with properly, you can speak to another Trustee.

Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing. Please include what happened, when, who was involved, and any steps already taken.

6. Confidentiality and anonymity
We will protect your identity wherever possible and will not share it without your consent unless required by law (for example, by the police or a statutory safeguarding agency). Anonymous concerns will be considered, but they can be harder to investigate and we cannot update you on the outcome. We encourage you to give your name.

7. Protection from retaliation
No one will suffer dismissal, disciplinary action, loss of volunteering role, harassment, or any other detriment for raising a concern in good faith, even if it turns out to be mistaken. Retaliating against or victimising a whistleblower is a serious disciplinary matter. Anyone who believes they have been treated unfairly for raising a concern should tell the CEO immediately. Knowingly making a false or malicious allegation may also lead to disciplinary action.

8. How we will respond

- We will acknowledge your concern within **5 working days**.
- We will assess it and decide whether to investigate, refer it to an external agency, or take other action.
- Where appropriate, an investigator independent of the matter will be appointed.
- We will keep you informed of progress and, where we can, the outcome, although we may be unable to share details for reasons of confidentiality or legal restriction.
- Serious concerns will be reported to the Board of Trustees. Where required, we will notify the Charity Commission, Ofsted, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the police or other relevant bodies. Serious incidents will be reported to the Charity Commission as required.

9. If you are not satisfied
If you feel your concern has not been handled properly, you may escalate it to the Chair of Trustees. You may also raise it externally, and you will be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 where the legal conditions are met. External routes include:

- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line:** 0800 028 0285 or help@nspcc.org.uk
- **Charity Commission** (for serious wrongdoing in charities)
- **LADO** or local children's services
- **Protect** (independent whistleblowing charity): 020 3117 2520
- Relevant regulators, such as Ofsted

10. Support, records and review
Anyone raising a concern can bring a colleague or union representative to meetings, and we will signpost wellbeing support. Records are kept securely and confidentially in line with data protection law. This section will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees, and all staff and volunteers will be told about it at induction and in refresher training.

Date: November 2026
Date for Review: November 2028
Reviewed by: Trustees