

Complaints Policy

Policy Owner:	General Counsel and Company Secretary
Policy Lead:	Senior Manager, Governance & Compliance
Review date:	9 th October 2024
Next review date:	October 2027

Introduction

LifeArc strives for high standards in engaging with our stakeholders, collaborating with partners and delivering impact for patients and welcomes feedback from users of our services, supporters and other individuals coming into contact with LifeArc.

We regard a complaint as being any expression of dissatisfaction about something LifeArc or its trustees or staff have done or failed to do. If we fail to meet our high standards, we want to hear about it so that we can respond to your concerns, put things right and learn lessons for the future.

We will take seriously any concern or complaint. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us to evaluate and improve our work. In addition, we have policies in place to protect anyone making a complaint.

Scope

The policy applies to complaints received from beneficiaries, supporters, and other individuals coming into contact with LifeArc. Complaints made by LifeArc staff are outside the scope of this policy but are dealt with instead in accordance with the employment policies noted below.

If, for any reason, you are unable to make the complaint yourself, a representative (such as a friend or family member) may make a complaint on your behalf. In this case your representative should explain why you are unable to make the complaint yourself. We may need to contact you directly to confirm that you have consented to your representative acting on your behalf.

A number of LifeArc's other policies and procedures also deal with complaints. If your complaint:

- a) Relates to the **handling of your personal data** by LifeArc, or you wish to request a copy of your personal data (a "data subject access request"), please refer to LifeArc's Privacy Policy, which is available [here](#).
- b) Relates to **safeguarding**, please refer to LifeArc's Safeguarding Policy.
- c) Is about your **experience as an employee**:
 - i. And you wish to raise concerns about conduct that you think might amount to a **disclosure protected under law** (being a disclosure in the public interest, i.e. about criminal activity, a miscarriage of justice, damage to the environment, health and safety being endangered, or non-compliance with other legal obligations by LifeArc), please refer to LifeArc's **Whistleblowing Policy**;

- ii. And you wish to raise concerns about your **treatment within the organisation**, please refer to LifeArc's Disciplinary, and Grievance Policies, as appropriate.

Policy Statement

We will ensure that we:

- a) Listen carefully to complaints and treat complaints as confidential, where possible.
- b) Record, store and manage all complaints accurately and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018/UK GDPR.
- c) Investigate the complaint objectively and within the stated timeframe.
- d) Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented.
- e) Keep a register of complaints, including details of the complaint, the date it was received, details of any investigation undertaken and copies of all communications relating to the complaint.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff and our Board of Trustees are required to read, understand and comply with this policy and its procedures.

How to Complain about our conduct or standards of service

Review date:	9th October 2024
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This process is aligned to the Complaints Policy dated 9th October 2024 and may be updated from time to time when opportunities for improvement are identified.

General principles

- When to make a complaint.** Complaints should usually be made within three months of the event being complained about. This is because if more than three months have passed since the event complained about, it may not be possible for us to investigate the complaint fairly. We reserve the right not to investigate complaints made outside this timeframe. However, we may agree to investigate complaints made after more than three months if you explain why you did not make the complaint sooner, and we think we are still able to deal with the complaint fairly.
- Anonymity.** We appreciate that sometimes you may wish to make a complaint on an anonymous basis. If you withhold your identity, we will take steps to investigate your complaint to the extent possible. However, if you provide your name and contact details it makes it easier for us to fully investigate the complaint, verify information and update you on the progress of our investigations. You can ask us to keep your identity confidential and specify any other aspects of the complaint that contain sensitive information.
- Disclosure.** Please note that our legal and regulatory obligations are such that we may be obliged to disclose the existence and nature of your complaint to our regulators, for example reporting a serious incident to the Charity Commission.
- Our timescales.** All complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible. We aim to acknowledge receipt of complaints within three working days of receipt and in most cases provide a full response within 30 days of receipt. There may be good reasons why we need to extend these timescales, for example if a key member of staff is away, in which case we will let you know our amended response times. See below under **What happens next?** for more information about timescales.
- Data protection.** To process a complaint LifeArc will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides, and which other people give in response to the complaint. We will hold this data securely and only use it to address the complaint. It may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applies or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties. LifeArc will normally destroy complaints files in a secure manner six years after the complaint has been closed.
- Unreasonable behaviour.** If we determine that complaint is unreasonable, or the behaviour of the person making the complaint is unreasonable we reserve the right to depart from our usual complaints procedure. Examples of unreasonable behaviour might include:
 - not following the complaints process
 - repeated or persistent complaints on the same subject or excessive communication

- harassment or abuse of our employees

We will not respond to complaints that constitute bullying and harassment, including messages that are abusive or threatening, and any such messages may be reported to relevant authorities.

Steps to take

Initial Action

If the issue relates to a specific individual that you are already in contact with, in the first instance you should seek to resolve the matter directly with your current point of contact.

What to do if initial action does not work

If the issue remains unresolved, you can make a formal complaint to LifeArc by sending an email to Complaints@Lifearc.org.

To help us to resolve the issue efficiently and fairly, please provide the following information in your complaint:

- a) Your full name;
- b) Your contact details (including address, email address and telephone number);
- c) How you would like us to contact you in relation to your complaint;
- d) Your relationship to LifeArc;
- e) A detailed description of your complaint and what you think went wrong, including dates and times of any reported incidents;
- f) Details of what you have done to try and resolve the issue so far;
- g) What you would like us to do to resolve the matter; and
- h) Copies of any documents related to the complaint.

What happens next?

- Your complaint will be logged on our system and directed to a member of our complaints team who was not involved in the matter being complained about. In some rare cases, we may ask a third party outside of the charity to investigate the complaint. For example, this may be necessary where the nature of the complaint means that it is not possible for us to deal with it fairly within the charity. This could be if the complaint is of a very serious nature or concerns a senior leader at LifeArc.
- Your complaint will be investigated within a reasonable timescale in order to establish the relevant facts. We will review all relevant evidence provided and may also gather and take into

account evidence that we have gathered. This may include asking you for further information or speaking to other individuals involved.

- Where a complaint relates to an individual or a group of individuals who work for LifeArc (for example, the Board of Trustees or staff), we will usually inform them of the complaint made against them and give them an opportunity to respond. Exceptions to this rule will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. For example, it would not be appropriate for us to inform the individual(s) where to do so may present a risk to you or others.
- If a complaint is particularly serious (for example if it relates to criminal activity or there is an allegation of serious harm to an individual), we will consider whether the complaint should be reported to a third party such as the police, or other statutory/regulatory authority such as the Charity Commission.
- We will tell you the outcome of your complaint, including reasons for the decision made. If your complaint is upheld, we will explain the steps we are taking to put things right, including any recommendations/remedies made, such as reviewing of policies, staff development and training or appropriate improvement to our services.
- A register of complaints and their corresponding corrective actions is provided to the Executive Leadership team to facilitate learning from matters raised.

Withdrawing a complaint

- You may withdraw your complaint any time by sending an email to Complaints@Lifearc.org. Depending on the nature of the issue(s) raised we may continue to investigate it however in these cases we will not be under an obligation to update you on any outcomes.

Appeal process

- If your complaint is not upheld or you are unhappy with the resolution offered, you may ask for your complaint to be re-considered by a more senior member of team who is independent of the original decision-maker and event complained about. At their discretion, they can review the complaint handling process to date, or they can re-investigate the complaint. They may ask for further information about why you think the original decision made was unfair.
- We will tell you the outcome of this review, including reasons for the decision made. If your complaint is upheld, we will explain the steps we are taking to put things right.

Escalation beyond LifeArc

- If you are unhappy with our response to your complaint following this internal review, you may wish to escalate your complaint to one of the following external organisations:
 - Charity Commission: <https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/raising-concerns/>.
 - Information Commissioner's Office: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>.