



THE DONALDSON TRUST

The National Body for Neurodiversity

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Version: 5

Date: May 2026

Owner: Director of People and Engagement

Table of Contents

Document Control	3
Version:	3
Next Review Due: May 2029	3
References:.....	3
Policies:.....	3
Forms:.....	3
Records:.....	3
Complaint records.....	3
Safeguarding records	3
Policy Statement.....	4
Purpose.....	4
Scope	4
External Engagement and Relationships.....	5
Governance and Accountability	6
What is a Complaint?	7
Child-Friendly and Accessible Approach	8
Safeguarding	8
How to Make a Complaint.....	8
Complaints Process.....	9
Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution	9
Stage 2 – Investigation.....	9
Outcomes	9
Escalation.....	10
Advocacy and Support	10
Confidentiality and Data Protection	10
Learning and Improvement.....	11
Monitoring and Governance	11

Document Control

Version:

Version	Date	Owner	Reviewer	Approver	Amend
3	June 2018	Head of Resource & Strategy	CEO	Board	
4	May 2024	Director of People and Culture	Service Leads	ELT	Review and updates
5	May 2026	Director of People and Engagement	ELT	QPIC	Review and updates

Next Review Due: May 2029

References:

Policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Fundraising Policy

Forms:

N/A

Records:

- Complaint records
- Safeguarding records

Policy Statement

The Donaldson Trust is committed to handling complaints in a fair, transparent and accountable way that reflects our charitable values and responsibilities.

We recognise that effective complaints handling is essential to:

- maintaining trust and confidence in our organisation
- safeguarding those we support
- improving the quality of our work.

We welcome feedback, concerns and complaints as an important opportunity to learn, improve and strengthen our relationships with the people we support, their families, partners and our wider community.

Our complaints process is designed to be:

- accessible and easy to understand, including for children and young people
- fair, respectful and person-centred
- timely and transparent
- supportive and inclusive
- focused on resolution and improvement.

Purpose

This policy provides a framework for:

- raising concerns or complaints about our work
- ensuring complaints are handled consistently and fairly
- supporting positive outcomes for individuals
- learning from feedback to improve practice and services.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints made by:

- children and young people
- families, carers and guardians
- people using our services
- members of the public

This policy also applies to complaints relating to the Trust's wider external engagement activity, including:

- delivery of paid services such as training, consultancy or commissioned work
- external engagement, partnerships, public affairs and influencing activity.

We are committed to ensuring the same standards of fairness, transparency and accountability apply across all aspects of our work.

This policy does not cover:

- fundraising activity and engagement with donors and supporters (please refer to our Fundraising Policy)
- Colleague grievances or disciplinary processes (covered by HR policies)
- Professional regulatory matters (e.g. GTCS, SSSC)
- Matters subject to legal proceedings

External Engagement and Relationships

The Trust works with a range of external stakeholders, including supported people, families, customers, partners and public stakeholders.

We recognise that concerns or complaints may arise from these interactions, and we are committed to handling them in a consistent, transparent and respectful way.

This includes:

- Customers and clients – ensuring that concerns relating to paid training, consultancy or commissioned services are addressed promptly and professionally
- External and public engagement – ensuring that our interactions with external stakeholders, including political engagement and influencing activity, are conducted responsibly and that concerns are handled appropriately

Complaints arising from these areas will be managed through this policy, unless they are subject to specific contractual or regulatory requirements, in which case this will be clearly explained.

Governance and Accountability

Board Responsibilities

The Board has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Trust maintains an effective, transparent and accountable complaints framework in line with its statutory and charitable duties.

The Board will:

- provide strategic oversight of complaints handling across all areas of the Trust's work
- seek assurance that complaints are handled fairly, consistently and in line with this policy
- monitor significant risks arising from complaints, including safeguarding, reputational, and regulatory risks
- review themes, trends and high-level learning from complaints to ensure these inform organisational strategy and improvement
- ensure the organisation meets relevant regulatory and legal requirements.

Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Responsibilities

The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for the effective implementation and operation of the complaints process.

ELT will:

- ensure complaints are managed in line with policy, timelines, and quality standards
- maintain robust systems and controls for recording, investigating and resolving complaints
- ensure appropriate resourcing, training and support for colleagues handling complaints
- oversee learning, improvement actions, and service changes arising from complaints
- escalate significant issues and risks to the Board in a timely manner

Operational Managers Responsibilities

Operational managers are responsible for the day-to-day delivery and quality of complaints handling.

They will:

- ensure complaints are responded to promptly, fairly and respectfully
- support teams to resolve concerns at the earliest stage wherever appropriate
- maintain accurate records and documentation
- identify and escalate themes, risks, and safeguarding concerns
- contribute to learning and continuous improvement.

Assurance and Reporting

Complaints data, themes and outcomes are regularly reviewed through internal governance structures

This includes analysis to:

- identify trends and recurring issues
- improve service delivery and user experience
- strengthen safeguarding and quality of care.

Regular reporting is provided to ELT and the Board to support oversight, accountability and continuous improvement

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is “any expression of dissatisfaction about our services, actions, decisions, or lack of action”

Complaints may relate to:

- Quality of education, care or support
- Safeguarding or wellbeing
- Communication or relationships
- Decisions made by colleagues
- Application of policies

Complaints can be made:

- verbally or in writing
- in person, by phone, email, letter or via a representative

We will support individuals who need help to raise a complaint.

Child-Friendly and Accessible Approach

We are committed to ensuring our complaints process is inclusive and accessible to all, including children and young people.

We will:

- accept complaints directly from children and young people
- explain the process in a clear, age-appropriate way
- provide support from a trusted adult or advocate if needed
- make reasonable adjustments to accommodate differences.

We recognise the rights of children and young people to express their views and have concerns taken seriously.

Safeguarding

Where a complaint raises a concern about the safety or wellbeing of a child or adult, this will be treated as a safeguarding matter.

This may result in:

- immediate action being taken
- information being shared with relevant agencies
- the concern being managed alongside or separately from the complaints process.

Protecting individuals is always our first priority.

How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made:

- In person to any member of the team
- By email: complaints@donaldsons.org.uk
- By telephone: 01506 841 900
- In writing to:
The Donaldson Trust
Preston Road
Linlithgow
EH49 6HZ

We will provide support to help individuals make a complaint if required.

Complaints Process

The Trust follows a two-stage complaints process.

Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution

Purpose:

- to resolve concerns quickly and informally where possible

Timescale:

- we aim to resolve complaints within 5 working days

Process:

- we will listen to the concern and seek to resolve it promptly
- this may involve an explanation, apology or immediate action
- a clear outcome will be provided

If the complaint cannot be resolved at this stage or is more complex, it will move to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Investigation

Purpose:

- to investigate more complex, serious or unresolved complaints

Timescales:

- acknowledgement within 3 working days
- full response within 20 working days
- if the timescale needs to be extended, you will be informed of the reason and provided with an updated timeframe

Process:

- an independent investigating officer will be appointed
- relevant information will be gathered
- the complainant will be kept informed throughout
- a written response will be provided including:
 - summary of the complaint
 - findings and decision
 - explanation of reasoning
 - actions taken where appropriate

Outcomes

A complaint may be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

Where appropriate, we will:

- offer an apology
- take corrective action
- make improvements to services.

Escalation

If you remain dissatisfied after Stage 2, you may raise your complaint with an external body.

Depending on the nature of the issue, this may include:

- Care Inspectorate
- Education Scotland or Scottish Government
- Local Authority
- OSCR
- Fundraising Regulator

This does not affect your right to raise concerns directly with regulators at any stage.

Advocacy and Support

You may have support from:

- a family member or friend
- an advocate

Independent advocacy is available through:

- Citizens Advice Scotland
- Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Confidentiality and Data Protection

We will:

- handle complaints confidentially
- only share information where necessary
- comply with data protection legislation

Information may be shared with relevant agencies where required, particularly in relation to safeguarding or legal obligations.

Learning and Improvement

We use complaints as a key mechanism for improvement.

We will:

- record and monitor all complaints
- analyse trends and themes
- identify learning and improvement actions
- implement changes to services, policies or practice where required

Learning from complaints is reported to executive leadership and governance structures.

Monitoring and Governance

We will:

- monitor performance against timescales and outcomes
- review complaint themes and trends
- report regularly to executive leadership and Board.

This ensures effective oversight, accountability and continuous improvement.

Managing Unreasonable Complaints

Where concerns are repetitive or unreasonable, we will manage them in a fair and proportionate way, ensuring individuals are treated respectfully and access to the complaints process is not restricted without careful consideration.