

Pony Partnerships CIC



Complaints and Feedback Policy 2026-2027

Name of Organisation: Pony Partnerships CIC

Venue/Address: All venues

Date of Review: 1 September 2026

Date of Next Review: 31 August 2027

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1. Policy Statement

Pony Partnerships CIC is committed to providing safe, inclusive, and high-quality services.

We welcome compliments, feedback, concerns, and complaints as opportunities to learn and improve.

Concerns will be handled:

- respectfully;
- fairly;
- promptly;
- proportionately;
- confidentially.

People raising concerns in good faith will not be treated unfairly or disadvantaged because they have done so.

2. Purpose

This policy explains:

- how feedback and complaints can be raised;
- how Pony Partnerships will respond;
- when another safeguarding, safety or professional process must take priority;
- how complaints will be reviewed and used to improve services.

3. Scope

This policy applies to feedback and complaints about:

- Pony Partnerships services and activities;
- the conduct of staff, associates, or volunteers;
- therapeutic, learning, enrichment, and commissioned provision;
- communication and service delivery;
- medical, allergy, health, and safety arrangements;
- organisational decisions within Pony Partnerships' control;
- searching, requests to hand over property, or temporary retention/confiscation of an item.

It may be used by:

- participants;
- parents and carers;
- advocates or trusted adults acting with appropriate authority;
- commissioners;
- partner organisations;
- visitors;
- members of the public.

Employment grievances, contractual disputes, and whistleblowing concerns will be managed through the appropriate organisational process rather than solely under this policy.

4. Raising Feedback or a Concern

Feedback or a concern may be raised:

- verbally;
- by telephone;
- by email;
- in writing;
- through an agreed accessible communication method.

A participant may be supported by a parent, carer, advocate or other trusted person.

Staff receiving a verbal complaint must record the key information and pass it promptly to the CEO/Manager or person responsible for handling it.

Where appropriate, Pony Partnerships will try to resolve straightforward concerns informally.

A person does not have to attempt informal resolution before making a formal complaint where:

- the matter is serious;
- they do not feel comfortable raising it informally;
- informal resolution would be inappropriate;
- previous attempts have not resolved the concern.

5. Matters Requiring Immediate Action

The normal complaints timetable must not delay action needed to protect a person, animal, information, or service.

5.1. Safeguarding concerns

Where a complaint indicates that a child, young person, or adult at risk may be unsafe:

- immediate safeguarding action must be taken;
- the DSL or DDSL must be informed without delay;
- staff must not investigate the safeguarding concern themselves;
- emergency services must be contacted where required.

Safeguarding action may take place alongside, before, or instead of parts of the complaints process.

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5.2. Concerns about an adult working for Pony Partnerships

Any concern about the conduct of an employee, associate, volunteer, trainee, director, or contractor must be reported immediately to the CEO/Manager or DSL.

The person receiving the concern must not:

- question the adult concerned;
- investigate the matter;
- promise confidentiality;
- discuss it unnecessarily.

The CEO/Manager or DSL will decide whether safeguarding, LADO, employment, contractual or other procedures apply.

5.3. Medical or allergy concerns

A serious medical incident, suspected anaphylaxis, missing emergency medication, or unsafe allergy arrangement must be managed immediately under the relevant emergency and incident procedures.

A medical or allergy complaint does not automatically require a safeguarding referral. Safeguarding concerns may arise where there is repeated missing medication, avoidable exposure to known risk, deliberate exposure, unsafe food sharing, or repeated failure to follow agreed arrangements.

5.4. Animal welfare concerns

Any immediate animal welfare concern must be reported to the Animal Welfare Lead, or to the CEO/Manager if the Animal Welfare Lead is unavailable.

The activity must be stopped where an animal or person cannot be kept safe.

5.5. Data or digital concerns

Actual or suspected data breaches, lost devices, unauthorised disclosures, or cyber incidents must be reported immediately to the CEO/Manager or designated lead.

Relevant evidence must be preserved and must not be deleted.

These actions do not prevent the person from also making a complaint about how the matter arose or was handled.

6. Formal Complaints

A complaint should normally be raised within three months of the event or issue.

A later complaint may be considered where:

- there is a reasonable explanation for the delay;
- the person was not previously able to complain;
- safeguarding or serious welfare concerns are involved;
- it remains possible to consider the matter fairly.

Pony Partnerships may ask for clarification where the complaint does not contain enough information to understand:

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- what happened;
- who was involved;
- when it happened;
- what outcome is being sought.

Lack of written detail must not prevent an accessible complaint from being accepted.

7. Complaint Process

7.1. Stage 1 – Acknowledgement and Allocation

Pony Partnerships will normally acknowledge a formal complaint within five working days.

The acknowledgement will explain:

- who is handling the complaint;
- what information may be needed;
- whether another procedure also applies;
- the expected response timescale.

The complaint must be allocated to a person who is sufficiently independent from the matter.

Where the complaint is about the CEO/Manager, it must be allocated to a Director who has not been involved.

Where the complaint is about a Director, it must be considered by another uninvolved Director or a suitably independent person appointed by the Board.

7.2. Stage 2 – Consideration and Response

The complaint will be considered fairly and proportionately.

This may include:

- reviewing relevant records;
- obtaining accounts from people involved;
- seeking clarification;
- considering relevant procedures and agreements;
- identifying immediate or ongoing risk;
- considering whether specialist advice is needed.

Pony Partnerships will normally provide a written response within 20 working days.

Where this is not possible, the complainant will be told:

- why more time is required;
- what action has been completed;
- the revised response date.

The response should explain, as appropriate:

- the complaint considered;
- the information reviewed;
- the findings;

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- whether the complaint is upheld, partly upheld, or not upheld;
- any apology, explanation, or corrective action;
- learning or service improvements;
- how to request a review.

Personal or confidential information about another person may need to be withheld.

7.3. Stage 3 – Review

A complainant who remains dissatisfied may request a review.

The request should explain:

- why they remain dissatisfied;
- any part of the response they believe was not addressed;
- any relevant new information.

within 10 working days of the Stage 2 response.

The review will be completed by a Director or suitably independent person who has not previously handled the complaint.

The review will consider whether:

- the complaint was addressed fairly;
- relevant information was considered;
- the procedure was followed;
- the findings were reasonable;
- further action is required.

The review outcome will normally be final within Pony Partnerships' internal complaints process.

8. Commissioned Provision

Where a complaint concerns commissioned provision, Pony Partnerships will clarify which parts relate to:

- Pony Partnerships' delivery;
- commissioner decisions or responsibilities;
- transport or other external services;
- statutory education, attendance, or placement decisions.

Pony Partnerships will consider and respond to matters within its responsibility.

Where another organisation is responsible for part of the complaint, Pony Partnerships will explain this and, where appropriate and lawful:

- provide the relevant contact details;
- refer the matter with the complainant's agreement;
- cooperate with the commissioner's investigation;
- retain its own record of relevant concerns and actions.

Urgent safeguarding, medical, allergy, attendance, or welfare information must be shared through the agreed commissioner route without waiting for the complaint process to conclude.

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9. Unreasonable or Abusive Contact

Pony Partnerships recognises that people may feel distressed, angry, or frustrated when raising a complaint.

A complaint will not be treated as unreasonable simply because it is persistent, challenging, or critical.

However, communication arrangements may be limited where behaviour becomes:

- threatening;
- abusive;
- discriminatory;
- harassing;
- unreasonably repetitive without relevant new information;
- so frequent that it prevents the complaint or other essential work from being managed.

Any restriction must:

- be proportionate;
- be authorised by an uninvolved Director;
- be recorded;
- explain how legitimate concerns may still be raised;
- be reviewed where appropriate.

Restrictions on communication must not prevent urgent safeguarding or safety concerns from being considered.

10. Confidentiality and Information Handling

Complaint information will be:

- handled sensitively;
- accessed only by people who need it;
- shared only where necessary and lawful;
- stored securely;
- retained in accordance with organisational retention arrangements.

Confidentiality cannot be promised where information must be shared to protect a person, meet a legal duty or investigate the complaint fairly.

Medical, allergy and safeguarding information must be treated as sensitive information.

A complaint specifically concerning personal information may also need to be managed under data protection procedures.

11. Recording and Learning

Pony Partnerships will maintain a complaints record containing, as appropriate:

- the date received;
- the complainant;
- the subject of the complaint;
- the person handling it;

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- safeguarding or safety action;
- acknowledgement and response dates;
- findings;
- outcome;
- actions and learning;
- review outcome;
- closure date.

Complaints, compliments, and feedback will be reviewed to identify:

- recurring concerns;
- safeguarding or welfare themes;
- medical, allergy, or emergency-arrangement issues;
- animal welfare concerns;
- information-sharing concerns;
- training needs;
- procedural changes;
- examples of good practice.

The Board will receive proportionate, anonymised information about significant complaints, patterns, overdue responses, and completed improvement actions.

12. Responsibilities

- Board of Directors: responsible for ensuring that:
 - an effective complaints process is in place;
 - serious complaints receive appropriate oversight;
 - organisational learning is acted upon;
 - the policy is reviewed.
- CEO/Manager: responsible for:
 - overseeing the complaints process;
 - allocating complaints appropriately;
 - ensuring urgent concerns are redirected immediately;
 - monitoring timescales;
 - maintaining the complaints record;
 - ensuring agreed actions are completed.
- DSL/DDSL: responsible for overseeing safeguarding action arising from a complaint.
- Animal Welfare Lead: responsible for responding to immediate animal welfare concerns arising from a complaint.
- Staff, Associates and Volunteers: must:
- respond professionally;
 - listen and record concerns accurately;
 - support accessible communication;
 - pass complaints and urgent concerns promptly to the correct lead;
 - cooperate with authorised enquiries;
 - maintain confidentiality;
 - not investigate matters outside their role.
- Complainants: People making complaints are asked to:
 - provide relevant information where possible;
 - communicate respectfully;
 - allow a reasonable opportunity for the matter to be considered;
 - tell Pony Partnerships where they need communication support or reasonable adjustments.
 - A person's communication style, disability, distress, or need for support must be considered before behaviour is judged to be unreasonable.

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13. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where:

- legislation or guidance changes;
- organisational arrangements change;
- a serious complaint identifies learning;
- complaint patterns indicate that improvement is required;
- commissioning requirements change;
- the Board requests a review.

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Appendix 1 – How to Make a Complaint

A complaint or concern may be raised using the following details:

Email: info@ponypartnerships.com

Post: Pony Partnerships CIC, c/o 84 Cheal Close, Shardlow, Derby, DE72 2DY

Telephone: 07505 951793

Complaints may also be accepted verbally or through an agreed accessible format.

Please tell Pony Partnerships where support or a reasonable adjustment is needed to make a complaint.

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