

SOP 9: Handling Complaints About ADCH Members

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Audience:	Internal and external audiences		
Owner:	Governance Committee	Author:	Central Team
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1. Purpose

This SOP defines the process for handling complaints about ADCH members and should be considered in line with the [ADCH complaints policy](#).

2. Scope

This procedure applies to complaints received regarding ADCH members, specifically those alleging breaches of ADCH rules, policies, procedures, or standards.

ADCH reserves the right to reject complaints that involve unreasonable or abusive behaviour. If a complainant exhibits unacceptable conduct, ADCH may restrict the methods of communication used with them.

3. Receipt of Complaints

Once a complaint is received, the Executive Director will:

- Assess the complaint to determine whether it falls within ADCH's remit. Complaints must relate to breaches of ADCH rules, policies, or standards.
- In the event of the absence of the Executive Director, the ADCH Secretary will take on their role and responsibilities outlined within this SOP.
- If necessary, the Executive Director may consult confidentiality with relevant individuals within ADCH, such as a Trustee, or staff member, with specific knowledge, to help determine whether the complaint falls within ADCH's remit and should be investigated. These individuals will not be involved in the investigation or resolution of the complaint, but their expertise may provide valuable context, such as knowledge of applying ADCH standards in specific settings or relevant experience that may assist in the assessment of the complaint.
- If the complaint falls outside ADCH's remit (e.g., not related to an ADCH member, poor customer service, or disagreements about rehoming decisions), the complainant will be informed and asked if ADCH may share the nature of the complaint with the member concerned. If consent is not provided, no further action will be taken.

4. Acknowledgement of Complaint

Within 10 working days, the Executive Director will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint and confirm whether it will be investigated.
- If the complaint does not fall within ADCH's remit, explain this to the complainant and seek their consent to share the complaint details with the member concerned (as above).

5. Investigator Appointment

If the complaint is within ADCH's remit, the Executive Director will assess the complaint and determine the most appropriate course of action. The Executive Director will then forward the complaint details to a designated pool of Trustees (as detailed in Appendix 1) responsible for handling complaints. The nature of the complaint will be specified to ensure the most relevant skills and expertise are applied in the investigation.

If no Trustee comes forward or additional expertise is required, the Executive Director will consult with the Chair, who may appoint another Trustee or an appropriate individual with the necessary expertise to investigate the matter.

6. Investigation Process

The appointed investigator(s) will be responsible for:

- Notifying the member: The management and/or Trustees of the member organisation under investigation will generally be informed by the investigator about the complaint, unless doing so would compromise the safety of any individual or animal involved.
- Conducting the investigation: The investigator will gather relevant information, interview necessary parties, and assess the complaint in line with ADCH's policies and procedures.
- The investigation and resolution of uncomplicated complaints will be completed within 28 days. More complex cases involving member organisations may take longer, but regular updates will be provided to the complainant.

7. Outcome and Actions

- Following the investigation, the investigator will notify the Chair of the findings.
- The possible outcomes include:
 - No further action if the complaint is not upheld.
 - Recommendations for improvements, which may include:
 - Improvement plans
 - External assessments or visits
 - Coaching or mentoring from another ADCH member
 - Referrals to relevant authorities, if necessary
 - Recommendation for termination of membership*
- *In the case of the recommendation termination of membership, this must go to the board of Trustees for decision and the process outlined in the [ADCH Constitution](#) must be followed. The member has the right to appeal as per ADCH's appeals process.
- For other outcomes, once the Chair is notified, the member and complainant should be informed of the decision by the investigator.

8. Board Notification

At each board meeting, the board will be updated on the number of complaints received, their outcomes, and any ongoing cases. These updates will be presented succinctly to ensure the board is informed without compromising the integrity of any ongoing investigations or requiring extensive discussion unless further action is needed.

Version History

Version	Changes Made	Date	Made by
V.1	Published	March 2025	Governance Committee