

## **Complaints Policy (Hindu Samaj Northstowe)**

**Last updated:** 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026

**Approved by:** Trustees of Hindu Samaj Northstowe (HSN)

### **1) Our Values and Principles**

Hindu Samaj Northstowe exists to bring people together through culture, spirituality, learning, service (seva), and community wellbeing. We aim to be a positive force for both the Hindu community and the wider public.

When we organize activities or communicate as HSN, we commit to:

- Respect and dignity: We treat everyone with kindness and fairness, regardless of background, faith, age, gender, disability, or personal circumstances.
- Inclusion and welcome: Our community activities aim to be open, friendly, and accessible.
- Integrity and accountability: We act responsibly with community trust, time, and funds, and take concerns seriously.
- Safety and safeguarding: The welfare of children and adults at risk is paramount.
- Transparency and learning: We listen, respond, and improve—complaints help us do better.
- Zero tolerance for abuse: We will not accept threatening, harassing, discriminatory, or abusive behaviour towards volunteers, trustees, participants, or members of the public.

### **2) Activities, Presence and Scope of HSN**

HSN is a community organisation that supports cultural, spiritual, educational, and wellbeing activities, including (but not limited to):

- Community festivals and flagship events (e.g., Diwali, Holi, Ganesh Chaturthi, Sharad Utsav)
- Weekly/regular gatherings, prayers, satsangs, cultural programmes and youth activities
- Workshops, talks, learning sessions, volunteering/seva initiatives and fundraising activities
- Community engagement, outreach, communications and partnerships

**Where we operate / presence:**

- Events and activities in and around [Northstowe/Cambridgeshire] at venues we hire, use, or collaborate with (such as community centres, halls, schools, outdoor locations).
- Online spaces such as our website and official HSN communication channels: email, WhatsApp groups administered by HSN, and social media pages where HSN is the account owner/administrator.

## **A community built on trust**

HSN is built on trust, respect, and shared responsibility. If something feels wrong, unfair, unsafe, or unclear, we want to address it quickly and respectfully.

This Complaints Policy applies to concerns about:

- How HSN activities are planned and delivered
- Conduct of HSN trustees, volunteers, organizers, or anyone acting on behalf of HSN
- HSN communications (including website/social media/WhatsApp administered by HSN)
- Participant experience and inclusion at HSN events
- Administration and handling of enquiries

**Issues Handled Differently:**

- Safeguarding concerns (children or adults at risk) – see Section 10 (handled urgently under safeguarding procedures)
- Matters that are legal disputes or require formal legal processes
- Complaints solely about third parties not acting for HSN (e.g., venue policies), though we may record concerns and raise them with partners where appropriate
- Anonymous complaints: We will consider them where possible, but limited detail may restrict what we can do

### **3) Our Commitment**

We will handle complaints:

- Fairly and respectfully

- As quickly as reasonably possible
- Confidentially (shared only with those who need to know)
- Without negative consequences for anyone raising a genuine concern

We also welcome feedback and suggestions—many issues can be resolved informally.

#### **4) What is a Complaint?**

**Complaint** - A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about HSN's actions, decisions, behaviour, services, or communications.

**Concern** - A concern is usually a small issue that can be resolved quickly (for example, at an event). We encourage informal resolution first where appropriate.

#### **5) Who Can Complain?**

Anyone impacted by HSN activity can complain, including:

- Participants, members (if applicable), visitors, parents/guardians
- Volunteers and organizers
- Partner organizations or venue representatives
- Members of the public affected by HSN activities

#### **6) How to Raise a Concern or Complaint**

##### **A) Informal Resolution (quickest route)**

If you feel comfortable, speak to the event organizer/coordinator at the time, or contact us soon after. Many issues can be resolved within a few days.

##### **B) Formal Complaint (in writing)**

Please email or write to:

**Email:** hindusamajnorthstowe@gmail.com

**Alternative contact email:** contact@hindusamajnorthstowe.org

**Postal address:**

In your message, include:

- Your name and contact details (unless anonymous)
- What happened, when and where

- Who was involved (if known)
- Any evidence (photos/screenshots/messages)
- What outcome you are seeking (e.g., explanation, apology, change in process)

**If you need support or reasonable adjustments** (e.g., accessibility, language support), please tell us—we will do our best.

## **7) What Happens Next (Our Process & Timelines)**

We use a simple two-stage process.

### **Stage 1: Acknowledge and Investigate**

- We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days.
- A trustee or appointed complaints handler (not directly involved in the matter) will review it.
- We may contact you for additional information.
- We will aim to provide a written outcome within 15 working days of acknowledgement.

### **Stage 2: Review / Appeal**

If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 outcome, you can request a review within 10 working days of receiving it.

- A different trustee (or a small trustee panel) will review the complaint.
- We aim to provide a final decision within 20 working days.

If we need more time, we will explain why and provide a revised timeframe.

## **8) Possible Outcomes**

Depending on the complaint, outcomes may include:

- A clear explanation of what happened and why
- An apology (where appropriate)
- Changes to processes, planning, or communications
- Additional volunteer guidance/training
- Mediation or a meeting to resolve the issue

- Action under our code of conduct (including restricting participation, where behaviour breaches safety/respect)

**Note:** Some outcomes may be limited by confidentiality, safety, or data protection.

## **9) Confidentiality and Record Keeping**

We handle information sensitively and share details only on a need-to-know basis.

We keep a record of complaints and outcomes to help improve future activities. Records are stored securely and retained for 12 months depending on the nature of the matter.

For privacy rights, please see our **Privacy Policy**.

## **10) Safeguarding (Children and Adults at Risk)**

If your concern involves the safety or wellbeing of a child or an adult at risk, **do not use the general complaints route**.

Please contact our safeguarding lead immediately:

**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Aparna Saxena Nigam

**Safeguarding email/phone:???**

If someone is in immediate danger, call **999**.

If you have urgent concerns but it is not an emergency, contact **Cambridgeshire Children's Services / Adult Safeguarding** via official council channels.

HSN will treat safeguarding matters as a priority and follow safeguarding procedures.

## **11) Unreasonable or Abusive Behaviour**

We understand that people may feel upset when making a complaint. However, we will not tolerate:

- Threats, harassment, hate speech, discriminatory language
- Persistent abusive or aggressive communication
- Unreasonable demands or repeated complaints without new evidence

In such cases, we may:

- Limit communication to one channel or one person
- End contact where behaviour is abusive

- Still consider the underlying complaint where possible, without engaging in unacceptable behaviour

## **12) Learning and Improvement**

We use complaints and feedback to improve how we serve the community. Trustees will periodically review:

- Patterns and recurring issues
- Practical improvements for events and communications
- Updates needed in policies and volunteer guidance

## **13) Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually.