



Crisis Complaints & Feedback Policy

This policy combines and replaces the Skylight Member Complaints Policy, the Fundraising Complaints Policy and the Data Protection & SAR Complaints Policy.

Author: Senior Compliance & Assurance Manager

Owner: Chief Operating Officer

Approval

Approved by SLT & ARAC on 13th May 2024

Creation

Date of approval:

Reason for amendment:

- The need to have a charity-wide approach to capturing and responding to complaints and other feedback from external stakeholders
- Changes to reporting/governance procedures
- Growth of retail operations
- Development of non-Skylight based member services
- Development of fundraising and marketing activities

Review

Frequency of review: 3 years

Next review date: May 2027

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1 Purpose & Statement

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a clear and consistent approach for recording and responding to all complaints, feedback, comments, and suggestions from all sources about every aspect of Crisis' work, including our services, campaigns, and retail operations. Crisis is committed to supporting people to access the policy in a way that is appropriate to them and meets their needs.

Crisis is also committed to providing a professional, friendly, and accountable service in line with our values to everyone we work with or who interacts with our charity. All feedback, including complaints, will be viewed positively as they can provide useful insights and help Crisis improve its work.

In the implementation of this policy, staff and volunteers will adhere to the Crisis Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, ensuring the process is simple, clear, and accessible to everyone, while remaining honest, respectful, and accountable.

This policy aims to:

- Ensure we adhere to Crisis standards in recording and responding to feedback, including timescales.
- Ensure there is organisational focus on learning lessons from complaints and feedback to improve our services.
- Ensure central monitoring and review for governance purposes.
- Ensure that all external stakeholders receive the highest possible standard of service from staff, volunteers and anyone acting on behalf of Crisis.
- Ensure we abide by the rules of our regulators, including the Charity Commission, the Scottish Charity Regulator, the Fundraising Regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office and the Health and Safety Executive.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all Crisis staff and volunteers and covers all complaints and feedback received from external individuals and organisations including members, supporters, Crisis at Christmas guests, retail customers, partner organisations and other external stakeholders.

Supporting procedures set out the processes in more detail and apply to specific areas of our services, such as Crisis at Christmas.

Complaints or other feedback from staff should be managed under the respective HR Resolution Policy and the volunteer management policies.

Crisis will encourage and enable feedback through the website by publishing email, postal address, and telephone numbers.

3 Definitions

Feedback is the collective term for a complaint, a compliment, or a suggestion.

A **complaint** is any expression of dissatisfaction, which requires a response. Some examples of complaints could include one or more of the following problems, but this is not an exhaustive list:

- Crisis delay in providing a service to a member or provides a poor-quality service to a member or other stakeholder e.g., partner agency/landlord we are working with.
- An employee's behaviour causes upset to a member or other stakeholder e.g., a staff member from another organisation feels that they have been treated discourteously.
- A supporter objects to the volume of fundraising or marketing material they receive.

There are 2 types of complaint:

- An **informal complaint** is where a member of staff or volunteer is informed directly, immediately after something has gone wrong, so that we have the chance to put things right as quickly as possible. An informal complaint can be dealt with by any staff member and is usually the person receiving the complaint or their manager. It can escalate to a formal complaint if we are unable to resolve the matter to the Complainant's satisfaction.
- A **formal complaint** usually of dissatisfaction with a service or services. This may take more time to investigate and resolve. If the complainant is unable to provide the formal complaint in writing Crisis will ensure this is not a barrier to making a complaint.

A **Complainant** is the person making the complaint. This can be any of our key stakeholders including members, supporters (people who donate funds, campaign on our behalf, visit our shops), organisations we work with, or other parties who have an interest in Crisis' work.

A **Compliment** is feedback giving praise to the service.

A **Suggestion** is an idea about how our service can be improved or changed.

Complaint Escalation is the passing of responsibility for dealing with a complaint to a person at a higher level in the organisation. A stakeholder can go straight to a formal complaint or ask for a formal complaint if they do not feel their complaint has resolved at the informal stage.

4 Overarching Process

Although there are a number of detailed procedures in Crisis related to specific services, all must follow the same core process.

Receipt

Complaints and other feedback may be received in person, by phone, email, social media, by post or through our website. Volunteers should refer any complaints or feedback received to their supervisor.

Recording

All feedback should be recorded locally in the first instance by the relevant service or team.

All complaints and other feedback will be dealt with in keeping with Crisis Data Protection Policy, respecting confidentiality, and personal data. Complaint records will be kept in line with Crisis' record retention schedule.

Complaints will require more formal handling than other feedback, however, staff are required to record all pertinent information associated with feedback to ensure Crisis is able to learn and react appropriately.

General feedback records should include:

- Who has given the feedback (or anonymous if no name given).
- The date the feedback received and/or the date of the issue if applicable.
- A copy of the feedback if written, or notes if given verbally.
- A copy of all the communications in connection with the feedback.

Formal Complaints should also include:

- Details of the investigation undertaken into the complaint, if applicable.
- Copy of the final response.

Complaint Levels & Response

There are three stages for a complaint:

Stage:	Description	Acknowledged within:	Responded to within:
Stage 1: Informal	Problem solving, dealt with immediately, by any staff member or referred to a colleague for resolution. The purpose is to understand the complaint and to	3 working days from receipt.	10 working days. Response could be

	resolve the matter to the Complainant's satisfaction as quickly as possible.		verbal or written.
Stage 2: Formal	<p>May require investigation to resolve and may be designated to a senior manager to action e.g., Skylight Director, Head of Service. The complainant has a right to appeal if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome and the written response should communicate this to the complainant.</p> <p>Crisis is committed to providing a written response at this stage but equally committed to ensuring the complainants needs are considered around how best to communicate the response.</p>	<p>3 working days from receipt.</p> <p>Escalated complaints from stage 1 within 3 working days of receipt.</p>	<p>Aim to respond within 10 working days (where the complaint is of a complex nature Crisis will notify the complainant and give a revised resolution timeframe).</p> <p>Response should be in writing.</p>
Stage 3: Appeal	<p>An appeal is the final stage of Crisis' complaints policy. If the complainant does not agree with the decision/outcome at stage 2, they should appeal within 28 calendar days of receiving the decision. An appeal will be designated to a Director and will only be heard by the CEO or trustees if it relates to the senior leadership team. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can seek redress from a regulatory body. Contact details will be provided at the appropriate time.</p>	<p>3 working days from receipt</p>	<p>Crisis will notify the complainant and give a resolution timeframe.</p> <p>Response should be in writing.</p>

Crisis will ensure it maintains communication with the complainant and keep them fully informed at every stage. Crisis will also ensure that the outcome is communicated to the complainant in a manner that is understood. The appeal time limit will be applied with discretion and will consider any exceptional circumstances or specific reasons that may have impacted the complainant's ability to meet the appeal timeframe.

Escalation

Complainants may request their complaint is initially addressed at stage 2, formal, without going through the informal stage.

Escalation from stage 1, informal, to stage 2, formal, occurs where a matter is not dealt with in time, or where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 1.

Where complaints are of a particularly serious or sensitive nature, we may choose to handle them immediately at a senior level, e.g., by the applicable Director or the CEO.

Regulatory Bodies

- Fundraising Regulator (FR) - most fundraising complaints are handled initially within the Supporter Care team. If a supporter is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, they may also choose to escalate further to the FR. The FR deal with fundraising in England and Wales and Scotland where it is carried out by charities registered primarily with the Charity Commission. [Make a complaint | Fundraising Regulator](#)
- Information Commissioner's Office - most data protection complaints are handled initially within the Strategy, Planning and Compliance team. If a Complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, they may also choose to escalate further to the ICO. [Make a complaint | ICO](#)
- Charity Commission - complaints should only be escalated to the Charity Commission if they are considered serious complaints, such as Crisis not doing what it claims to do, losing lots of money, harming people, being used for personal profit or gain, involved in illegal activity. The Charity Commission encourages complainants to complain to the charity directly in the first instance unless they suspect illegal activity. [Complain about a charity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) – deals with complaints if they are considered serious complaints, such as Crisis not doing what it claims to do, losing lots of money, harming people, being used for personal profit or gain, involved in illegal activity [OSCR raise a concern](#)
- Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) – the ASA identifies problems that need to be addressed in advertising. If a complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of a complaint relating to Crisis advertising, then they can escalate concerns through this regulatory body. [Make a complaint - ASA | CAP](#)

Response to compliments/suggestions

Any compliments and suggestions should be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt with a suitable thank you message.

5 Responsibilities

Staff and volunteers will:

- Ensure that all complaints and feedback we receive is responded to in a positive and professional manner.
- Ensure that all stakeholders have equal access to the policy.
- Ensure that complaints are handled sensitively and confidentially.
- Record all complaints and feedback however they are received, whether verbally or written in the appropriate system e.g., MAPS, CRM.

Managers will:

- Ensure that all new staff and volunteers in roles likely to encounter complaints and feedback are introduced to this policy in their induction period.
- Monitor the receipt of complaints and feedback in their area and ensure that they monitor trends and investigate where the level of complaints and feedback seems low or high and, for example, explore with their team ways of improving awareness of the policy.
- Monitor the recording of all complaints and feedback and the quality of the response, ensuring that all data is up to date and that complaints are managed within policy and in the manner expected.
- Ensure that the complaint process timescales are adhered to and, where this is not possible, ensure that complainants are kept fully informed on the progress of their complaint.
- Review any learning actions from complaints and feedback, identifying any actions for improvement locally, good practice that can be shared or inform changes to wider processes in Crisis and ensuring those actions are shared with the appropriate people or teams.
- Ensure that all complaints and feedback are responded to in an accessible way.
- Ensure they meet quarterly reporting timescales for providing information on complaints and feedback, including a summary, action taken and any learning, to inform quarterly reports.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers receiving a complaint or feedback are informed, where appropriate, of the outcome and any other involvement they are required to have throughout the process.

Crisis will:

- Ensure we make all complaints and feedback procedures accessible and simple to navigate.
- Meet our regulatory requirements for handling complaints e.g., fundraising, data protection.
- Promote an open, honest, and fair approach to receiving and managing all complaints and feedback.
- Encourage a culture of learning from complaints and feedback and celebrating compliments.
- Provide appropriate assurance to internal and external stakeholders of policy management and implementation.
- Ensure staff and volunteers affected by a complaint have access to appropriate support for their wellbeing.

6 Quality, Evaluation and Monitoring

Crisis has a robust reporting schedule in place. Quarterly reports will be reviewed to include:

- summarised list of all complaints received, and actions taken.
- Outcomes.
- lessons learnt.
- adherence to the process.

The directorate leadership groups will:

- Consider whether policy and procedures are being followed.
- Review outcomes and lessons learnt identifying trends, concerns and good practice that may inform organisational changes.
- Agree on any issues suggesting a need to review the policy.

Reporting Schedule:

Quarterly reporting	Data preparation owner	Quality assurance owner	Reporting owner
Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	SLT Directors	Compliance & Assurance	Head of Compliance & Assurance
Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC)	SLT Directors	Compliance & Assurance	Head of Compliance & Assurance
Client Services Governance Committee (CSGC)	Client Services Procedure & Governance Team and Directors of Operations	Executive Director of Client Services	Executive Director of Client Services
Board of Trustees	SLT Directors	Compliance & Assurance	Head of Chief Executives Office

An annual report statement will be provided to the Charity Commission by the Company Secretary, in line with Section 13 of the Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016, that includes the number of fundraising complaints.

The Supporter Operations Manager for fundraising will complete and submit the annual fundraising complaints report to the Fundraising Regulator.

Directors and Heads of Service will ensure that feedback received is a regular agenda item at management team meetings for information sharing, sharing good practice in dealing with complaints and deciding on appropriate action to take; updates will be provided on feedback received and related actions.

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