



## Complaints Policy

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## Contents

1. Policy Statement.....	3
2. Purpose .....	3
3. Scope .....	3
4. Roles and Responsibilities .....	5
5. Reporting a Complaint .....	6
6. Triaging Complaints.....	7
7. Investigation Procedure .....	8
8. Timeframe.....	8
9. Resolving Complaints .....	9
10. Information Sharing and Storing.....	9
11. Internal Appeals and External Escalation of Complaints.....	9
12. Communication of the Procedure .....	11
13. Complaints that do not fall within the scope of the policy.....	11
14. Associated Policies and Procedures.....	12
15. Annexure .....	12
Annex 1: Formal External Complaints Process - Flowchart.....	13

## 1. Policy Statement

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Receiving feedback and responding to complaints is an important part of improving ShelterBox's accountability. The effective handling of complaints, and the learning opportunity from dealing with them, is important to the success of ShelterBox. Ensuring our stakeholders can hold us to account will improve the quality of our work in all areas.

## 2. Purpose

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- To provide a means of complaint for the recipients of our aid and the communities/individuals we work with as well as our external stakeholders (further detailed within 'scope').
- To ensure accountability and the effective handling of complaints
- To enable organisational learning and improvement.
- To ensure internal and external transparency of the complaints handling procedures
- Further, this procedure is intended to ensure that ShelterBox complies with the requirements set by external regulatory bodies, including the Charity Commission and Fundraising Standards Board.

## 3. Scope

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This policy applies to ShelterBox and is global in its application. It covers the process of external formal complaints from the recipients of our aid and the communities/individuals we work with as well as supporters, partners, suppliers, contractors, or any member of the public, whether an individual, company or other entity, in the UK or anywhere else in the world.

Complaints can relate to any part of ShelterBox aid delivery, fundraising activities, or any other service, which ShelterBox provides.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service, actions or lack of action, by ShelterBox, its employees, volunteers or other ShelterBox

representatives<sup>1</sup>. It is a criticism, which expects a reply. Complaints could include the following (which is not an exhaustive list):

- Concern from someone we work with over the quality of our programme delivery.
- Concern from a member of the public or supporter about a particular fundraising approach or campaign action.
- Concern about the behaviour of employees, volunteers or other ShelterBox representatives.

A complaint is not the following:

- A general enquiry about the work of ShelterBox
- A request for information
- A contractual dispute
- A request to amend records e.g. to cancel an address, or correct personal details.
- A request to unsubscribe from a ShelterBox service e.g. campaign newsletter/emails.

The complaints procedures do not apply to complaints that are subject to current investigation by any regulatory body, or other legal/official authorities in the UK, or in other countries in which we operate. The relevant regulatory body will deal with such issues.

Complaints by employees and volunteers are not covered by this policy. Applicable policies include the *Grievance Procedure* (within the Employee Handbook), the *Resolving Differences Policy* (volunteers), the *Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy*, the *Disclosure of Malpractice (Whistleblowing) Policy* and the *Safeguarding Policy*.

This policy is concerned with formal complaints. It is hoped that employees or volunteers at a local level can deal with most complaints or concerns about ShelterBox's work or behaviour informally. However, it is recognised that not all issues can be resolved in this way. A formal complaints mechanism is required for those occasions

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to employees and volunteers, ShelterBox representatives may include trustees, affiliates, partner organisations, consultants, contractors (including freelance photographers, drivers, fixers etc.), casual labourers, donors, Rotarians, and anyone else who is representing ShelterBox.

when an individual or organisation wishes to make their complaint a matter of record and to receive a formal response.

This policy does not form part of an employees' terms and conditions of employment and may be subject to change at the discretion of management.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

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### **ShelterBox:**

- Are responsible for ensuring that accountability is ensured by the effective handling of complaints and associated organisational learning and improvement.
- Will ensure compliance with the requirements set by external regulatory bodies, including the Charity Commission and the Fundraising Standards Board.

### **The Executive Team:**

- Will take responsibility for ensuring compliance with regulations concerning complaints and their handling, and for ensuring that action is taken in the light of the outcome of any investigations.
- Are responsible for reviewing and updating this Policy annually, and in line with legislative and organisational developments (with the Board of Trustees).

### **The Board of Trustees:**

- Has a monitoring role and will receive and consider a quarterly update regarding complaints.
- Are responsible for reviewing and updating this Policy annually, and in line with legislative and organisational developments (with the Executive Team).

### **The Human Resources (HR) Team:**

- Are responsible for receiving all complaints that are not safeguarding-related and for the initial handling of the complaint.
- Are responsible for keeping an organisational record of all formal complaints.

## Safeguarding Officers:

- Are responsible for receiving complaints that are safeguarding-related and for the initial handling of the complaint.
- [safeguarding@shelterbox.org](mailto:safeguarding@shelterbox.org)

## 5. Reporting a Complaint

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All formal complaints should be made by the individual/organisation making the complaint, or via someone acting on their behalf. Complaints can be made using one of the following methods:

- Email: [complaints@shelterbox.org](mailto:complaints@shelterbox.org)
- Telephone: +44 (0) 1872 302663. Our phone lines are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. Outside of these hours you can always leave us a message and a contact number and someone will return your call.
- Post: Complaints, C/o HR Department, ShelterBox HQ, Falcon House, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2PH. A member of our HR team will acknowledge all complaints.
- Independent Whistleblowing Service: if you don't feel able to report malpractice to ShelterBox directly, we have an independent, confidential reporting mechanism provided by Safecall where you can raise your concerns. Any matters raised will be treated in strict confidence. Please include your name and contact details in correspondence, however you can remain anonymous if you wish. You can contact Safecall 24 hours a day, seven days a week:
  - By freephone:
    - UK: 0800 9151571
    - Philippines: 1800 14410499
    - Other numbers are also available – please visit the Safecall website (below) for further details.
    - Via the web: [www.safecall.co.uk/report/](http://www.safecall.co.uk/report/)

### Safeguarding

If your complaint is related to safeguarding, please utilise one of the following methods:

- Email: [safeguarding@shelterbox.org](mailto:safeguarding@shelterbox.org)
- Post (see above)
- Independent whistleblowing service (see above)

### Anonymous reporting

We treat anonymous complaints as seriously as non-anonymous complaints but reporting anonymously may limit our ability to pursue concerns.

### Information to Share

At the point of raising a concern, it would be useful for the complainant to share information describing:

- What has actually happened? Provide notes of dates, times, people and places.
- Who is involved?
- Whether anyone is at immediate risk of harm?
- How do you know about it? When were you first concerned about it?
- Have you told anyone about it?
- Was any action taken?

The complainant is requested to include their name, address and contact telephone number in correspondence so that we can get back in touch. Please note that anonymous reporting is, however, possible (see above).

## **6. Triaging Complaints**

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Upon receipt of the complaint, the decision will be made on whether it is appropriate to handle the complaint under this policy. See section 13 for information on complaints that do not fall within the scope of this policy.

**Critical Incidents:** A critical Incident will be initiated if the reported incident represents a current risk to people in contact with ShelterBox or to the reputation of ShelterBox.

**Safeguarding:** If the complaint is related to safeguarding, the Safeguarding Officer(s) will be informed and steps taken will include ensuring the immediate safety and welfare of survivor(s).

## 7. Investigation Procedure

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If an investigation is initiated, the following key actions will be taken:

- Appoint an Investigation Management Team and an Investigation Manager
- Plan the investigation (write and Investigation Plan with Terms of Reference) and undertake a risk assessment
- Gather and study background material and documentary evidence
- Update the Investigation Plan and draft interview questions
- Interviews conducted (subject of the complaint is interviewed last)
- Write investigation report and management outcome report
- Conclude the investigation, submit to Case Management Team (or Crisis Management Team) for appropriate follow-up
- Allocate budget
- Decision to investigate communicated to Survivor / Complainant
- Seek legal guidance
- Decision made on what and who to inform: key external (including formal reporting to donors) and internal stakeholders as well as statutory referrals.
- Physical evidence gathered

## 8. Timeframe

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All complaints will be dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. The complainant will receive formal confirmation of their complaint within **5 working days** from the date received. Note: if the Complainant has included a postal address for correspondence, communication may take longer.

The Complainant be informed whether the complaint has or has not been substantiated. The timeframe for this will depend on a number of factors such as whether an investigation is carried out.

If an investigation is required, the aim will be to conclude the investigation within **4 weeks** of the receipt of the complaint wherever possible.



## 9. Resolving Complaints

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Options for resolving complaints:

- an apology where the complaint is justified
- fixing the specific problem
- improving the aspect of service that led to the problem

Outcomes following the raising of complaints may include:

- Ensuring appropriate support has been provided to the survivor utilising the survivor-centred approach
- Disciplinary action

## 10. Information Sharing and Storing

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The principle of sharing information on a need to know basis will be adhered to at all times. Confidentiality implications will be considered at all times – whether sharing information internally or externally.

All complaints will be handled on a confidential basis. In some cases, it may be necessary to disclose information to third parties. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis ShelterBox will adhere to the regulations of all regulatory bodies (such as the Charity Commission and the Fundraising Standards Board) and any incidents will be reported as required.

The Board of Trustees will receive and consider quarterly updates on complaints.

An organisational record is kept of all formal complaints. All original documents must be returned to the complainant unless required.

All data will be stored in accordance with Data Protection requirements.

## 11. Internal Appeals and External Escalation of Complaints

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Internal appeal process: If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, the complainant can ask the issue to be escalated as follows:

- Internal escalation:
  - The ShelterBox CEO. The CEO will respond within ten working days from the date the complaint is received.
  - If the complaint is against the CEO, the complaint will be submitted to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will respond within ten working days from the date the complaint is received.
- External escalation:
  - If we are unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the complainant may wish to escalate the complaint externally. Details of appropriate organisations or bodies can be found below:

### Fundraising Regulator

ShelterBox is committed to the highest standards in fundraising practice. If your complaint is to do with fundraising and you feel that it has been unresolved by us then the Fundraising Regulator can investigate your complaint.

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints/>

### Advertising Standards Authority

If you have a complaint about advertising, the Advertising Standards Authority can help. As the regulatory body for advertising, they can investigate advertising campaigns that you may feel are inaccurate, offensive or deceptive or the way that the charity communicates with you. <http://www.asa.org.uk>

### The CHS Alliance

The CHS Alliance accepts complaints against its member organisations who fail to apply their own commitments and/or the principles and commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard. <https://www.chsalliance.org/complaints/>

### Information Commissioners Office (ICO)

The ICO is a UK based independent authority that regulates various legislation governing information rights including the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR). If you have concerns about an organisation's information rights practices, the ICO can help. <https://ico.org.uk>

## The Charity Commission

Alternatively, if your complaint is related to another area of our work and you do not feel completely satisfied by our response then you can contact The Charity Commission. <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>.

Other agencies include the Police, the Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive or Social Services Department.

## **12. Communication of the Procedure**

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A dedicated webpage can be found on the ShelterBox website giving information on raising complaints and details of this will be shared with ShelterBox stakeholders, including employees, volunteers and other ShelterBox representatives. Members of the public will also be able to access this information.

Partners will be informed of our Complaints Policy at the outset of the partnership or where the partnership was already established before the Complaints Policy was in existence, partners will be informed at the earliest opportunity.

Members of the affected community in which we work will be informed of complaints and feedback mechanisms available within the communities. Care will be taken to ensure that requirements for filing a complaint take into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable and considers minority and disadvantaged stakeholders.

## **13. Complaints that do not fall within the scope of the policy**

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Complaints that are raised through any of the channels detailed in Section 5 but which relate to an action for which ShelterBox is not responsible or which is not within our sphere of influence would be dealt with in a different manner. Complainants would have their complaint acknowledged and ShelterBox would exercise duty of care by ensuring that the complaint was shared appropriately. An example is a protection concern that was raised, which was not directly related to ShelterBox's work – this would, for example, be referred using in-country referral mechanisms but ShelterBox would not manage the complaint directly.

The objective of addressing complaints that are raised informally (i.e. not using one of the mechanisms outlined in the section on reporting complaints) is to resolve the matter with a minimum of conflict or distress.

Refer to the section on 'Scope' to see the definition of a complaint.

## **14. Associated Policies and Procedures**

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*Code of Conduct*

*Complaints Policy*

*Critical Incident Management Plan*

*Disclosure of Malpractice Policy (Whistleblowing)*

*Gathering Content Policy*

*Harassment and Bullying Policy*

*Managing Safeguarding Reports Policy*

*Reference Policy*

*Reporting Serious Incidents Policy*

*Safeguarding Policy*

Other policies and procedures as appropriate

## **15. Annexure**

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- Annex 1: Formal External Complaints Process - Flowchart

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