

Complaints Policy and Procedure



Why have a Complaints Policy and Procedure?

The Charity Commission report '*Cause for Complaint*' states: 'an effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships with the people on whom the charity depends.'

Handling complaints well:

- Demonstrates our commitment to our clients and other stakeholders
- Demonstrates our commitment to providing the best possible service
- Helps us to find out about things that have gone wrong so we can fix them
- Helps us to prevent things going wrong again in future.

COMPLAINTS POLICY

The Veterans Charity views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint. Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at The Veterans Charity knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of The Veterans Charity's work.

Where complaints come from

Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in The Veterans Charity, e.g. donors, funding organisations, beneficiaries, volunteers and partner organisations assisting in the delivery of welfare.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the CEO and Trustees.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Complaints procedure

Publicised contact details for complaints

Written complaints may be sent to The Veterans Charity, Unit 7, Seven Brethren Bank, Barnstaple, North Devon, EX31 2AS or by e-mail at contact@veteranscharity.org.uk

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 01271 371001.

Receiving complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded. The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address, telephone number and email address
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to The Veterans Charity (for example, donor or beneficiary)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

Resolving complaints

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to The Veterans Charity's CEO within three working days.

If the complaint is against the CEO, it should be passed to the Chair of the Trustees, who will arrange to investigate it.

On receiving the complaint, if it has not already been resolved, the CEO will delegate it to an appropriate person for investigation and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person investigating the complaint within a week of receipt. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed by the CEO (or Chair of the Trustees in the event of a complaint against the CEO).

The request for Stage Two review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it and should say when the complainant can expect a reply.

The CEO will investigate the facts of the case themselves which may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. In the event of a complaint against the CEO this will be done by the Chair of the Trustees.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless it is decided that it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission will consider can be found on their website at: www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

If your complaint is about our fundraising activities and we are unable to resolve it to your satisfaction, you can ask the Fundraising Regulator, the regulator for fundraising in the UK, to consider it by:

- submitting your complaint through their website www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk