



Complaints Policy

September 2023

Review Date: September 2024

1. Overview

Action4Youth is committed to providing high quality services.

We welcome all types of feedback. Please email positive feedback to office@action4youth.org.

We recognise that occasionally things may not meet your expectations and that you may choose to complain. In such circumstances we are committed to:

- providing a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use
- publicising our complaints procedure
- ensuring that all complaints are investigated and responded to in a timely way
- resolving the complaint and, wherever possible, repairing relationships
- gathering information which helps us to improve what we do.

This policy includes complaints that are related to fundraising. We operate within the guidelines of the [Fundraising Regulator](#) and our own [Fundraising Promise](#).

A complaint should be made within three months of the incident that caused the problem. In exceptional circumstances complaints will be considered outside of this timeframe.

All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.

2. How to make a complaint

Firstly, decide if you would like to make an informal complaint or a formal complaint, then follow the appropriate procedure.

If your complaint is about a particular service or our fundraising activities, then you may use either the informal or formal complaint procedure. The informal procedure is intended to be easy, quick and responsive to the complaint.

If your complaint is about the behaviour of a staff member (including any self-employed staff, contractors and volunteers) it must be in writing as a formal complaint for the attention of the Chief Executive.

3. Informal complaints procedure

In the first instance, please arrange to speak with the relevant Action4Youth manager. This will depend upon the particular Action4Youth service you have been using.

If you are unsure who to direct your informal complaint to, you can find the best person by:

- visiting www.action4youth.org/meet-the-team
- emailing office@action4youth.org, or
- phoning 0300 003 2334.

Please be sure to let the manager know that you are making an informal complaint. The manager will make a note of your name, contact details, the nature of your complaint and the outcome that you would like.

The manager's verbal response will be made as soon as practicable, recognising that time is of the essence. The manager will attempt to resolve the complaint while speaking to you initially but may also arrange a time to call back following further research into the matter.

Written confirmation of the complaint response will be sent to you by the manager within five working days of the verbal response.

The written response will include the following:

- our understanding of your complaint
- an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the event which is the subject of the complaint
- reasons for any unsatisfactory service and, if appropriate, a formal apology
- what course of action will be taken to remedy any unsatisfactory service
- what you can do next if you are not satisfied with the response.

If you feel that your informal complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, please then use the formal complaints procedure below. You may, of course, decide to use the formal complaints procedure at any point during the informal procedure.

4. Formal complaints procedure

Formal complaints must be made in writing and emailed to office@action4youth.org.

A formal complaint must be titled 'Formal Complaint' and must include full details of your complaint, your name and contact details and the outcome you would like to see. If you have used the informal procedure, please also state why you remain dissatisfied.

Within three working days the Office Manager will, in writing, acknowledge receipt of your complaint and provide you with the contact details of the person who will be handling your complaint. This will normally be a Director.

The Director will respond in writing to your complaint in full within 10 working days. During this time, the Director will research and investigate the issues raised. It may also be necessary to contact you during this time to clarify any information. The Director's response will include the following:

- our understanding of your complaint
- an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the event which is the subject of the complaint
- the reasons for any unsatisfactory service and, if appropriate, a formal apology
- what course of action will be taken to remedy any unsatisfactory service
- what you can do next if you are not satisfied with the response.

If you are not satisfied with the response from the Director, you may ask for the complaint response to be reviewed by emailing office@action4youth.org. The review will be conducted by someone who has not been involved previously, normally the Chief Executive.

The reviewer will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing within three working days and respond in writing to your complaint within 10 working days.

The reviewer's response will only address the reasons why you were dissatisfied with the Director's response. The reviewer will not re-investigate the issues surrounding the complaint unless there are clear points of disagreement or dispute. It is important that you highlight any such points.

The reviewer's response is final and there is no further recourse under this policy.

You may stop the procedure at any point. You must confirm this in writing to office@action4youth.org.

5. Complaints about staff behaviour or conduct

Where your complaint relates directly to the conduct or behaviour of Action4Youth staff (including any self-employed staff, contractors and volunteers) the complaint should be made in writing to the Chief Executive, sent to office@action4youth.org.

The complaint will be dealt with as if it were a formal complaint, except that it will be handled by the Chief Executive. At the request of the Chief Executive the initial investigation may be carried out by the relevant line manager for that person.

Where your complaint relates directly to the conduct or behaviour of the Chief Executive, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees who will follow the formal complaints procedure.

6. Complaints relating to our fundraising activities

Any complaints relating to our fundraising activities will be subject to further scrutiny as part of our commitment to charitable regulation and good practice.

We subscribe to and follow the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Practice and Fundraising Promise both of which set the professional standards expected of all charitable fundraisers. If we have breached any aspect of the code or promise, we will refer that complaint to the Fundraising Regulator.

When responding, we will:

- signpost the complainant to the [complaints process](#) of the Fundraising Regulator
- inform the complainant of their right to refer their complaint to the Fundraising Regulator within two months if they remain dissatisfied
- explain that if we feel that we have not been able to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, we will self-refer it to the Fundraising Regulator.

7. Monitoring complaints

We keep a record of the number and type of complaints received in order to improve our services and provide relevant training to staff, as appropriate. Statistics concerning these will be regularly reviewed by the Chief Executive and brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees on an annual basis. All complaints will be logged centrally and monitored.

In relation to fundraising complaints, a summary of all our investigations and outcomes will be provided to the Fundraising Regulator each year, as part of our annual complaints return.

8. Vexatious or habitual complaints

Staff may have contact with a small number of persistent or vexatious complainants who absorb a disproportionate amount of resources in dealing with persistent complainants.

For example, a habitual or vexatious complainant may:

- continue to pursue a complaint when the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted
- change their complaint, or continually raise new issues to prolong contact
- not clearly identify issues or focus on trivial matters to an extent that it is out of proportion to its significance
- have an excessive number of contacts with Action4Youth, placing unreasonable demands on staff
- become aggressive and unreasonable in their demands and expectations.

The Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of Trustees will determine if a complainant is vexatious/habitual. The complainant will be notified in writing by the Chief Executive of the reasons and the action that will be taken, which may include:

- drawing up a signed 'agreement' with the complainant (which sets out an ongoing code of behaviour for the parties involved)
- declining all further contact, which will be preceded by a letter stating that Action4Youth has done all that it can to resolve any existing complaint(s).