
Break Complaints Procedure

The following procedure outlines the arrangements Break has in place in the event of a complaint. We are committed to dealing with matters efficiently, effectively, and respectfully, and treat all expressions of dissatisfaction with the utmost seriousness.

This complaints strategy is for customers, donors, anyone who has received/is receiving a service from Break, and anyone who has experienced any aspect of Break's work. It is also for any partner organisation who is dissatisfied with Break's work.

N.B: Break staff, volunteers, and trustees must refer to a separate complaints policy.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, either written or spoken. It can be made by an individual or group. It can be regarding any aspect of Break's work, including service delivery, fundraising, retail, etc.

We recognise that compliments and complaints are an important part of our customer feedback. We are dedicated to making sure that our procedure is fair, accessible, timely, inclusive, and appropriate. We will investigate things thoroughly, with respect and courtesy, as it is in our best interests that the complainant is impressed and content with the way in which we have dealt with their dissatisfaction.

We will make sure action is taken where necessary, and we will use complaints in order to grow as an organisation. If you are not happy with the result of the complaint, you will have the right to appeal.

Making a complaint

Complaints can be made in person or in writing (via post or email).

We have three stages in our complaints process. You may wish to involve an advocate, friend, or someone else to support you at any stage. We encourage you to speak openly about your concerns – your complaint will not affect your rights.

Stage 1

Most complaints are dealt with by managers and front line staff. This is the most appropriate route for most complaints, especially those that are not regarding serious misconduct.

A complaint at this stage can be dealt with via email, over the phone, in person, or via direct message of one of our social media pages (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). We will respond to you via the same medium that you have contacted us.

If you are not sure who to direct your complaint to, you can contact reception, where they will forward appropriately. Your complaint will be responded to as quickly as possible.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from your initial complaint (or would prefer your complaint to be formally investigated), you can register a formal complaint.

You should write out the details of your complaint and send it to either:

- Complaints Manager, Break, Schofield House, Norwich, NR6 6BX. OR
- complaints@break-charity.org.

You will receive a written acknowledgement from the Complaints Coordinator (via email or post). You will receive this acknowledgement within three working days from the day it is received. This acknowledgement will contain:

- Name, postal address, email address, and telephone number of the person who will investigate the complaint,
- The date the investigation will start,
- An offer of support where appropriate.

In instances where the complaint is made verbally, this acknowledgement will be in writing also. It will include a written summary of the complaint.

You will ordinarily then receive a full response to your complaint within a maximum of 28 working days from the date of the previous written acknowledgement. The full response will include:

- Details of the investigation and what has been found,
- A decision as to whether the complaint was upheld or not,
- Details of the changes Break will make to prevent a recurrence of the issue/s which lead to the complaint,
- The reason for the decision,
- The redress (if appropriate) which will be offered, e.g. an apology, additional help, or direction to other sources of advice or support.

If it is not possible to provide a full answer to a complaint within 28 working days, the investigating officer will write at 28 working days with a progress report explaining the reasons for the delay and a date of when it is expected the investigation will be completed.

Stage 3

If you are not satisfied with your response to both prior stages, the final stage is to outline the reasons for dissatisfaction in writing (by post or by email) to the CEO (or the Chair of the Board if your complaint is about the CEO).

An Appeals Panel, normally of three members and including a trustee, will be convened to consider the appeal. The CEO or Chair will be responsible for ensuring the panel is appropriately representative and restricted to people who have had no previous involvement in your complaint.

Members of the panel will:

- Read through the necessary papers,
- Speak with the relevant individuals involved with the complaint,
- Make a final decision.

The chair of the Appeals Panel will then write within 28 days of receiving the appeal to confirm:

- The final decision about the complaint,
- The reason for the decision,
- The redress (if appropriate) which will be offered, e.g. an apology, an explanation, or direction to other sources of advice or support,
- Details of the changes we will make to prevent the recurrence of the issue/s which led to the complaint,
- Any action that may be taken in light of the complaint.

Review of the process

If you have used stages one through three of the above procedure and do not feel that Break has followed the process properly and dealt with your complaint fairly (e.g. by giving insufficient opportunity to represent your views or ensuring all the relevant people are involved in the investigation), then you can outline the reasons for your dissatisfaction about the process, in writing or electronically, to the CEO (or the Chair of the Board if it is about the CEO) to request a review of the complaints handling process.

In this instance, the CEO or Chair will make arrangements for a review of the complaint handling process and will inform you of how the review will be carried out.

The decision process review will be final. The Chair or CEO will write to you within 30 working days of receiving your appeal. Their communication will include:

- Whether or not the procedure has been followed properly and fairly,

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- The reason for the decision,
 - The redress (if appropriate) which will be offered, e.g. an apology, an explanation, or direction to other sources of advice or support,
 - Any action that may be taken in light of the review.

Further resources

Charity Commission

If you remain dissatisfied, there is recourse to the Charity Commission which will be able to advise on whether they may be able to assist. The Charity Commission can be contacted at:

http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About_us/Contacting_us/default.aspx

Fundraising complaints

Contact the [Fundraising Regulator](#) to complain about the way you've been asked for donations, or how fundraisers have behaved. You can also complain on behalf of someone else.

Advertising complaints

Contact the [Advertising Standards Authority](#) to complain about:

- An advertising campaign you think is offensive, deceptive or inaccurate,
- The amount of emails or mail you get from a charity.