



# Complaints Handling Policy

## 1. Commitment to good complaints handling

This policy is designed to provide a positive response to complaints and comments, and ensure that Animal Saviours is open about the improvements that we have made as a result of feedback.

The Chairman will monitor the implementation of this policy, collect information about required improvements, and will report all complaints and outcomes to the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis.

Many complaints arise from misunderstandings. It is very important to ensure that every effort is made to ensure that trustees, staff and volunteers understand the reasons for decisions made about the charities activities. The need for complaints can often be avoided if there is good, ongoing communication between Animal Saviours, our partners and the general public.

Animal Saviours is committed to providing a quality service and achieving the highest standards. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our partners, members of the public or others who may want to comment. Therefore we aim to ensure that:

1. Making a complaint is as easy and transparent as possible.
2. That we deal with complaints appropriately and within the agreed time frame.
3. We treat a complaint as any clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service, or organisation as a whole, which calls for a response.
4. We respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation or an apology where we have got things wrong and if relevant and appropriate information on any action taken.
5. We have the right to refuse to accept a complaint where the complaint is clearly vexatious, malicious or motivated by racist, sexist, homophobic or other discriminatory attitudes, or where the complaint threatens or abuses Animal Saviours staff/volunteers. The decision as to whether a complaint is vexatious will be taken by the Chairman in conjunction with the Board of Trustees where necessary.
6. When a complaint identifies that something has gone wrong or has fallen below standards it is seen as an opportunity to improve and avoid a recurrence and it can allow for systems, policies, practices or procedures to be amended or put in place as appropriate.

## 2. Scope of Policy

This Policy is intended to apply to any complaint, regardless of who makes it.

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our organisation, our staff, our volunteers, our partners, our contracted service providers or anyone else acting on our behalf.

A complaint may be made by a person to whom we deliver services or who is affected by our services, a partner, a local organisation with which we work, our staff, volunteers, donors or a member of the public.

### **Example area's where this Policy applies:**

a member of the public contacts us to express their concern about the way in which we have conducted a fundraising campaign;

a local person or partner raises with us concerns about one of our programs;

## 3. Publicising this Policy

This policy is published on our website ([www.animalsaviours.org](http://www.animalsaviours.org)) and is freely available for download.

## 4. How complaints may be made

An online form is available to register complaints directly via the Animal Saviours website ([www.animalsaviours.org](http://www.animalsaviours.org)). In addition a PDF version of the form is also available for download. This can be printed, completed and returned by email.

### **Contact Details:**

Email: [info@animalsaviours.org](mailto:info@animalsaviours.org)

Online: [www.animalsaviours.com](http://www.animalsaviours.com)

## 5. 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 a trustee of Animal Saviours within five business days.

On receiving the complaint, the trustee records it in the complaints Logbook. If it has not already been resolved, they investigate it and 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 Animal Saviours within five working days. 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 a month. 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 at Board level.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Board of Trustees. The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Board of Trustees may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior or independent person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the trustee who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. 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 the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

## **External Stage**

Animal Saviours is registered with the Charities Commission of England and Wales, the complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Charities Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>.

### **Special Cases:**

In cases where the Chairman is the subject of the complaint the appeal will be referred to a member of the Animal Saviours Board of Trustees

Complaints regarding external service providers will be referred to their own complaints procedure. Where appropriate, complainants will be informed of the complaints procedures of other professional bodies

## **6. Time limits on making complaints**

Normally complaints should be made within three months of the event or within three months of the complainant becoming aware of cause to complain, subject to an overall limit of six months from the event. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the trustees in discussion with the Chairman, and taking into account reasons for the delay and the practicability of investigating the matter.



## 7. Confidentiality

All complaints will be kept confidential to the parties concerned. However, where the issues raised are of a particularly serious nature, the details of the complaint will normally be made known to the Chairman who will discuss the matter with the Board of Trustees where necessary.

## 8. Continuous improvement

This procedure will be the subject of periodic review in the light of local practice and/or the receipt of changes to national procedures or guidelines.

## 9. Useful Organisations

**Citizens Advice Bureau:** [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

**Charity Commission of England & Wales:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>