National Literacy Trust

Change your story

Complaints policy

November 2025

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Policy statement

We are committed to providing excellent customer service to everyone who uses our services, is involved in our programmes or supports our work, and to a process of continuous improvement. Our complaints policy is just one element of this.

We recognise that sometimes things go wrong, or mistakes are made. This policy outlines the procedures to follow to make a complaint and the internal procedures we will follow to manage the process. It is available on our website and a copy will be sent to anyone making a complaint. It will also form part of the induction process for staff and trustees, and regular reports will be provided to the senior management team and trustees.

Objectives

The objectives of our complaints procedure are to ensure that:

- Any complaints that are received are investigated at the appropriate level in the organisation
- All complaints are acted upon as soon as possible
- Those making complaints know how their complaint will be dealt with
- Wherever possible, lessons are learned.

Definitions

Customer

In this policy, we use customer to refer to any legitimate service user, beneficiary, donor, partner or volunteer who has any dealing with the organisation as part of our charitable activity. It does not include our team of staff and trustees. (Staff can raise issues either with their line manager or through our formal grievance procedure. Trustees can raise issues with the Chair of Trustees.)

Complaint

For the purpose of our complaints procedure, a complaint is defined as a written record related to our work that is provided by any customer of the National Literacy Trust. It must be sent to the appropriate person to be registered and you should have received an acknowledgement that the complaint has been received.

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This definition does not include a comment provided by an individual asking for a simple remedy to a minor problem.

This policy also covers how we will deal with fundraising complaints, defined as any written expression of dissatisfaction with our fundraising activities, including the conduct of fundraisers, acts by third-party agencies on our behalf, marketing communications, transparency, donor preferences or compliance with the Code of Fundraising Practice.

Integrity

During the process of dealing with a complaint, we will be as open and transparent as possible. Customers raising complaints will be given full information about the progress of their complaint except where other internal processes may subsume the complaints procedure. If this happens, the Director of Resources will provide an explanation without disclosing any restricted information.

Complaints process

Customers making formal complaints are asked to write or email an explanation of the issue that has caused them to be dissatisfied. A complaint should also contain an explanation of what the person making the complaint requires to be done to resolve the issue.

Complaints should be sent in the first instance to office@literacytrust.org.uk to register them within the procedure. The Office Manager will send an acknowledgement that the complaint has been received.

Complaints will be referred to the Director of Resources in the first instance, unless such a person is specifically mentioned in the complaint, in which case it will be referred to the Chief Executive or another appropriate senior member of staff.

All correspondence about complaints will be treated as confidential.

The complaint reviewer will consider the detail of the complaint, and carry out an investigation as necessary. Any investigations will be carried out thoroughly and fairly to establish the facts of the case. If a complaint has been made against a member of staff, they will be informed of the nature of the complaint and given the chance to respond to any allegations made. The investigation may also involve

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reviewing relevant evidence and speaking to the complainant and any third parties involved or other witnesses.

The person raising the complaint will receive a written response detailing any proposed remedial action. This will be done within 28 days of the receipt of the original complaint. If this is not possible, the Director of Resources will explain this in writing within the first 28 days.

The outcome of the complaint will be communicated in writing to the customer. Should the customer wish to progress the complaint, a second review may be requested. The second reviewer will be the Chief Executive, or another member of our senior management team if the Chief Executive led the first review. This will be our final response on the matter.

Further progression of a complaint beyond this second review will depend on the nature of the matter. The Charity Commission has a list of the types of issues it would be willing to investigate. Other alternative routes include the police, trading standards or the health and safety executive within a local authority/funding body. Our response following a second review will explain all relevant options.

If the complaint relates to our fundraising activity and remains unresolved after four weeks, or if the complainant remains dissatisfied following our response, they may refer the matter to the Fundraising Regulator. Customers making fundraising complaints will be informed of this right in our response.

Email: complaints@fundraisingregulator.org.uk
Phone: 0300 999 3407
Web: fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints.

If an accusation is made that this procedure has not been followed, the matter can be raised for discussion at a trustee meeting by contacting the Chair of Trustees. The Trustee meeting will not consider the substantive matter but may refer the whole matter back to the first review stage and ask for a report to make sure that the full procedure is followed.

If at any stage the customer making the complaint wants to stop a complaint from being progressed, the customer can do so in writing to the Director of Resources. The National Literacy Trust reserves the right to continue to investigate serious complaints in these circumstances.

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Donor preferences

We will uphold the highest standards in collecting and respecting donors' preferences regarding the frequency and method in which we make contact about the impact of their donation, and other ways to support our work. Systems will record and honour 'Do not contact' requests and data subject rights under GDPR.

Should a complaint about our management of donor preferences be upheld, remedial actions may include an apology, correction of donor records, staff/agency training, halting communications or, in extreme cases where it is found that the Fundraising Code of Practice has been breached, disciplinary action.

Reporting of complaints

The Trustee Board will receive a report at least once a year showing how many complaints have been received, the general nature of the problem and a list of remedial actions that have been taken.

Continuous improvement

The National Literacy Trust strives to be a learning organisation and our procedures for reviewing and improving our ways of working will include information from this process.

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