



Customer feedback and complaints:

Your right to be heard

A guide to the
customer feedback and
complaints process

www.guidedogs.org.uk

Why is complaining important?

We value your comments, and we learn important lessons from the feedback we receive that help us improve our services.

We promise to respond to all complaints in a professional, consistent and transparent manner, and aim to resolve them as swiftly as possible.

You have a right to expect the very highest standards from us. If we don't meet those standards, and you are not satisfied with any part of our services, policies or conduct, you should tell us.

This booklet tells you what to do if you need to complain or just wish to feedback about a situation you are unhappy with, and gives a brief overview of the stages in our complaints process.

Who can complain?

If you're a service user, a supporter, a member of the public, or an external partner or supplier, you are entitled to complain. Please note that we have separate processes

- if you have a concern as a volunteer about your role
- if you are a service user unhappy at a decision made relating to our services to you.

How do I complain?

You can raise your concern with anyone – locally or centrally – by phone, in writing (either by letter or email) or in person. It is usually best to raise your concern with local staff first, as this is the quickest and easiest way to sort out the problem.

What happens next?

Once you've made contact with us, your concern will be logged on our system, and the process will begin straight away. You will be kept informed of progress.

Frequently asked questions

Q: Is the process confidential?

A: Only those directly involved in resolving your complaint will have access to the information you provide. You will be made aware of who this is. We will handle information in line with the Data Protection Act.

Q: Can I remain anonymous if I complain?

A: Yes, if you so request, but please be aware that this might mean we can't investigate your complaint fully. In the unlikely event that your complaint were to lead to legal action or we find we are under a legal duty to disclose, we may be required to disclose your details even if we have not obtained your consent.

Q: What support can I call on during the process?

A: If you are a service user, you may be supported by your service user representative. Other complainants may be accompanied by a supporter at any meetings conducted during the investigation.



What will happen to my complaint?



We aim to resolve issues as quickly and locally as possible. If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the manager dealing at the first stage, you can ask for another manager to look into the matter, which is the second stage of our complaints resolution process.

In the rare cases where resolution at this stage is not possible, and there are valid grounds for appeal (decided by our CEO), then a final appeal may be made to the Guide Dogs's External Adjudicator whose decision shall be final. The grounds for appeal are either

- Failure to follow the complaints procedure
- Or relevant facts have been ignored or given inappropriate weight
- Or production of fresh information which might reasonably affect the earlier decision.

Final fundraising appeals will be referred to the Fundraising Regulator and where applicable appeals in relation to our lottery or similar will be referred to the Independent Betting Adjudication Service.

The External Adjudicator is also able to decide whether a complaint is considered to be unfounded or unreasonable, in which case the complaint is closed.

Please note that the complaints process cannot be used as a way of overturning or perpetuating concerns properly addressed and closed via a grievance, disciplinary or appeal process.

Please also note that there may be circumstances where the police or other statutory authorities have intervened or are about to intervene in relation to your complaint. In such circumstances this may mean that the process is closed and there is no right to appeal.



If I am not satisfied with the External Adjudicator decision is there anywhere else I can take my complaint?



Not within Guide Dogs, but you may wish to get in touch with the Charity Commission. For more guidance on the type of complaints they will deal with, please visit: www.charitycommission.gov.uk



Contact details

If you're not sure who to contact, call **freephone 0800 953 0031** or email: **complaints@guidedogs.org.uk**

or write to:

Customer Feedback & Complaints
Guide Dogs
Hillfields
Burghfield Common
Reading
RG7 3YG

and your concern will be referred to the correct department.

Or visit our website at:

www.guidedogs.org.uk/complaints