

Asylum Welcome Complaints Policy and Procedure

Last revised: October 2024

Revisions made: Bringing together existing complaints policy with volunteer complaints policy and adding more detail.

Next Revision: October 2026

1. Definition

Definition of a Complaint: A complaint is any expression, verbal or in writing, of dissatisfaction about any aspect of our work.

2. Commitment

Asylum Welcome believes that if an individual or organisation wishes to make a complaint or raise a concern it should be easy for them to do so. We welcome complaints and see them as an opportunity to learn, adapt, and improve service delivery and other aspects of our work. We are committed to taking all complaints seriously and investigating them in full and in a timely manner.

3. Key principles

- All complaints will be handled fairly for everyone concerned and all Asylum Welcome representatives will respond to complaints in a positive and understanding way.
- Complaints can be submitted verbally, by letter or online. Complainants may use a complaints form if they prefer (**Appendix 1**). We will share clear information for clients on how to make a complaint (**Appendix 2**) translated into core languages.
- Complaints are an important form of feedback. We aim to find fair and reasonable solutions to complaints as quickly as possible.
- We record and monitor all complaints, in whatever form they are received.
- Where a member of staff receiving a complaint believes that the issue meets the criteria for notification to our insurers or a regulatory body (e.g. Charity Commission, the Fundraising Regulator, or the Information Commissioner's Office) they will inform a member of SMT immediately.
- We understand that complainants may sometimes wish to remain anonymous. Anonymous complaints will be treated as seriously as all other complaints, though in some cases it may be harder to take appropriate action.

4. Scope of this policy

- This policy covers complaints from clients, partner organisations, volunteers, funders, members of the public and any other external person or organisation.
- Staff wishing to make a complaint about Asylum Welcome should do so using the Grievance Policy, which is designed for this purpose, rather than this complaints policy

5. Related policies

Grievance policy (in staff handbook)

Whistleblowing policy (in staff handbook)

6. Complaints from clients

Feedback from clients – including complaints - is essential to the ongoing improvement of our services, and we will endeavour to make the complaints process as accessible as possible. Clients can complain to us at any time if they are not happy with the service we provide. All complaints will be taken seriously and will never compromise the support we offer. The process of making a complaint will be carefully explained, information on how to make a complaint (Appendix 2) will be available in appropriate languages, and where clients submit complaints in a language other than English, they will receive a reply in that language.

6.1 Informal complaints

Clients may wish to first speak with the relevant staff member or manager about their concerns. The staff member or manager may be able to resolve the issue immediately. If the matter is more complex, they will respond within 10 working days.

6.2. Complaints in writing

6.2.1. If the client is unhappy with the response they receive, or if they wish to make their complaint more formally, they should do so in writing to the Director, by email to director@asylum-welcome.org; in writing to the Director at Asylum Welcome, 9 Newtec Place, Oxford, OX4 1RE, using the complaints form if they prefer; or by submitting an online complaint via our website, which will be forwarded to the Director

6.2.2 The Director will acknowledge the complaint in writing within three working days. He will then investigate the complaint, or request a senior member of staff to do so. Investigation will involve reviewing the matter and talking with the members of staff involved and talking with the complainant further if necessary. The Director or his delegate will provide a written response within 10 working days of acknowledging the complaint. This will set out suggestions for resolving the matter. If further investigation is required, and therefore further time, they will provide an interim response, setting out why this is the case and informing the complainant of the action taken to date or being considered.

6.2.3. If the client is not happy with the response they receive, the complaint can be escalated to the Chairs of Trustees at trustee@asylum-welcome.org or by letter to the Chair of Trustees, Asylum Welcome, 9 Newtec Place, Oxford, OX4

1RE. They will acknowledge the complaint within three working days, let the complainant know which Trustee will be investigating the complaint, and send a response within 10 working days of acknowledging the complaint. This will set out suggestions for resolving the matter. If further investigation is required, and therefore further time, they will provide an interim response, setting out why this is the case and informing the complainant of the action taken to date or being considered.

6.2.4. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response they should write to the Chair of Trustees, setting out the reasons, and they will report the matter to the other Trustees, no later than the next scheduled meeting of the Asylum Welcome Board of Trustees. At this meeting the matter will be looked at and it will be decided what further steps can be taken to resolve the situation.

6.3. Complaints about the Director or Trustees

6.3.1. If the initial complaint is about the Director, or about a Trustee (other than one of the Co-Chairs of Trustees) the complaint should be submitted straight to the Chairs of Trustees and steps 6.2.3 – 6.2.4 will then be followed.

- 6.3.2. If the initial complaint is about one of the Co-Chairs of Trustees, the complaint should be sent in the first instance to the Director, who will request another trustee to investigate. The Director will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three days, let the complainant know who will be investigating the complaint, and respond to the claimant within a further 10 working days. If further investigation is required, and therefore further time, they will provide an interim response, setting out why this is the case and informing the complainant of the action taken to date or being considered.
- 6.3.3. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, the Director and the trustee who has carried out the initial investigation will appoint an appropriate and suitably qualified person externally to further investigate, will let the complainant know who is investigating, and will respond with the findings and a suggested resolution within 10 working days.

7. Other external complaints

Other external complaints, including from partner organisations, members of the public, and any complaints about fundraising, should follow the process set out in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above.

8. Complaints from Volunteers

While we hope that volunteering is a positive experience at Asylum Welcome we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. We encourage volunteers to talk about things they are not happy with and communicate openly within their teams or with their service coordinator or the volunteer coordinator. We hope difficulties can be resolved through the normal channels of communication but where this is not possible we have

a formal complaints procedure. The purposes of this policy are to provide a clear way of resolving disputes, to promote fairness in our treatment of volunteers, to enable a culture of openness and to safeguard our clients' wellbeing.

8.1 Complaint in writing

- If a volunteer feels that the matter has not been resolved through informal discussions, they should put their complaint in writing to their immediate supervisor. If the complaint involves a volunteer's supervisor then the complaint should be put in writing to the Volunteer Coordinator. Please ensure that the written complaint is as detailed and specific as possible. Please see Appendix 1 for a copy of the complaints form, which can be used if preferred. The supervisor or Volunteer Coordinator will inform the Director of the complaint.

- A meeting will be held between

a) the volunteer and their supervisor

or

b) the volunteer and the Volunteer Coordinator (if the complaint is regarding the volunteer's supervisor).

The meeting will give the volunteer an opportunity to explain their complaints. The volunteer has the right to be accompanied to the meeting.

Following the meeting, the supervisor (or Volunteer Coordinator) will give a written response within 10 working days outlining the response to the complaint. If the complaint requires further investigation this time limit may need to be extended.

- If the volunteer is not satisfied with how the matter has been resolved the volunteer must raise the matter in writing with the Director. The Director will inform the Chair of the Trustees at this stage. The Director will invite the volunteer to a meeting where they can discuss the matter and establish how best to resolve the situation. Following the meeting the Director will give a written response within 10 working days outlining the response to the complaint. If the complaint requires further investigation this time limit may need to be extended. The response will follow this meeting and include a reference to the right of appeal.
- If the volunteer wishes to appeal any decision, they must appeal in writing to the Chair of trustees within 10 working days of the decision being communicated to them. The volunteer will be invited to a meeting with the Chair. The volunteer has the right to be accompanied to the appeal meeting. The Chair of Trustees's decision will be final.