

COMPLAINTS POLICY



Insight Gloucestershire, Wiltshire Sight and Sight Support West of England work together to provide comprehensive local services for people with sight loss. This policy has been developed jointly and applies to individuals (service users and supporters) from all three organisations.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to set out how and where individuals can complain, what will happen on receipt of a complaint and how and when complainants will be contacted as the complaint is processed.

2. Policy aim

Sight Support West of England, Insight Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Sight aim to provide our service users with practical and emotional support to enable them to live as independently as possible, taking into account their differing needs and aspirations. Further, we aim to fundraise in an open and respectful manner. However, we recognise that from time to time the quality or level of services provided may fall short of what people could reasonably expect. It is only by drawing attention to these occasions that we can learn and develop, making sure that the services provided meet the realistic expectations of clients.

Therefore we would like you to tell us if you feel that:

- we have failed to respond to a routine service request
- we have provided inadequate or unsatisfactory service
- we have displayed undue delay in taking action
- a member of staff or volunteer has been discourteous or unhelpful
- a fundraising ask has been overly demanding or aggressive
- inaccurate or misleading information has been provided about services or fundraising
- we have failed to treat information you have given us securely and respectfully

Note: Any complaints concerning Safeguarding of Children or Vulnerable Adults, or about Data Protection, are covered under separate policies as the reporting procedures and actions are substantially different. We take all complaints in these areas extremely seriously and will deal with them with the utmost urgency.

3. Making a complaint

In the first instance, any complaint should be made either in writing, using recording tapes, Braille format, or dictated over the telephone at a time pre-arranged with the CEO.

- Written, or dictated complaints should be addressed to the CEO and sent to our registered office in Devizes:

St Lucy's Sight Centre, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes SN10 2AT.

- Telephone complaints should be made by ringing 01380 723682 and an appointment made for dedicated telephone time to be booked with the CEO or an individual nominated by the CEO.
- The complaint should state: Name, where and how you can be contacted, and full details of the complaint with dates and times etc.

If the initial complaint is about the CEO, contact details of the Chair of the Board (or nominated representative) will be given so that the complaint can be directed there.

4. Action to be taken on receipt of a complaint

4.1 Complaints about services (not against a member of staff)

All complaints are taken seriously and will be acknowledged within 7 working days of receipt. Except in the case of a complaint against the Board of Trustees or member of staff, the CEO will investigate the circumstances that have led to the complaint. If the CEO feels able to resolve the complaint, a reply will be sent in the appropriate format (that originally used by the complainant). The response will set out either (i) why the CEO does not feel the complaint is justified or (ii) if the complaint is justified, an apology and what steps have been taken to prevent a similar complaint arising in future.

The response to the complaint will usually be sent within 2 weeks of receipt. If a longer investigation is needed, then follow up acknowledgements will be sent at no less than 2 week intervals.

4.2 Complaints about fundraising (not against a member of staff)

All complaints are taken seriously, and will be acknowledged within 7 working days of receipt. In the first instance, complaints will be reviewed and investigated by the Head of Fundraising, Marketing and Communications (HoFMC). If the HoFMC feels able to resolve the complaint, a reply will be sent in appropriate format. This is likely to be the format used for the initial complaint. If the person making the complaint asks for a phone call, written notes will be kept of the response and any follow up questions or discussion. The response will usually be

sent within 2 weeks of receiving the complaint. If a long investigation is needed, then follow up acknowledgements will be sent at no less than 2-week intervals.

If you do not feel that we have fully answered your complaint, or that you are not satisfied with our conclusions, you can ask for the complaint to be escalated to the CEO, who will review your complaint and the response given. If your complaint relates to our fundraising and you are not satisfied with our response, you may contact the Fundraising Regulator at www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk.

4.3 Complaints against a Member of Staff, Volunteer or Board member

In the case of a complaint against a member of staff, volunteer or a member of the Board, the CEO (or Chair of Board if the complaint is about the CEO) shall acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days and offer an informal meeting (in person or by telephone) within 21 days of receipt of the complaint.

The meeting is to ensure that the complainant is clearly listened to and all aspects of the complaint have been heard without any prejudice on behalf of the officer concerned. At the end of the meeting the complainant will be advised what the next steps will be and how they are to be kept informed of the outcomes.

If the CEO feels unable to resolve the complaint, he/she may refer it to a member of the Board within the 21-day period for further consideration or investigation. The complainant will be informed if this additional step is required.

The CEO/Chair of Board will consider all the information and decide upon any actions required and shall communicate the results of the investigation to the complainant within a reasonable time, normally within 21 days.

During the above steps an additional period of time for investigation may be considered where details of the complaint are complex and require more information.

If the complainant feels that the outcome of the informal meeting with the CEO has not achieved conciliation, the complainant shall have the right to refer his/her case personally to a sub-committee of no more than three Trustees. Board members will receive a copy of all correspondence prior to this meeting.

At the end of the meeting the complainant will be advised what the next steps will be and how they are to be kept informed of the outcomes.

The decision of the Trustee sub-committee shall be final.

5. Recording and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are a valuable source of feedback for our charities. We are committed to learning from complaints to improve our services, policies, and practices.

A log of complaints will be stored centrally on our organisational shared drive.

Each complaint will be analysed to determine if there are any broader systemic issues, and necessary changes will be made to prevent recurrence.

Complaints data will be reviewed periodically by the senior leadership team to identify patterns or recurring issues. This review will inform decision-making and help improve the quality of service and the work environment for staff and volunteers.

The Board of Trustees shall be regularly informed by the Chief Executive of the number and nature of complaints, and their outcome.

The outcome of any complaint investigations will be communicated to relevant stakeholders, including staff and volunteers, when necessary, to ensure that lessons are learned and shared.

Where appropriate, the organization will make necessary changes to its practices, policies, or procedures based on feedback from complaints to ensure continuous improvement.

6. Staff and Volunteer Complaints Training

All staff and volunteers will receive training on the charity's complaints handling process as part of their induction and ongoing professional development. This training will include:

- Understanding the importance of listening to and respecting complainants
- How to handle complaints professionally and confidentially
- Steps for managing complaints according to this policy
- How to maintain impartiality and neutrality when dealing with or investigating complaints.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years. Last review October 2025.