


Newcastle West End Foodbank

Handling Complaints Policy

Version No.: 2.0
Effective From: 25 October 2022
Review Date: 24 October 2024

| Signature: | Signed by: | Position: | Date: |
|---|--------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
|  | Rev D J Coad | Chairman | 25 th October 2022 |

1 Policy statement

The Newcastle West End Foodbank (WEFB) is committed to working in an open and accountable way that secures the Charity and respect of stakeholders, and as such recognises the role of an effective complaints policy in fostering transparency, fairness, and a culture of continuous improvement.

2 Organisational Responsibility

The Trustees and CEO have overall responsibility for ensuring the Foodbank follows the following procedures set out for handling complaints.

3 Scope

This policy covers the handling of complaints received from Foodbank clients, volunteers, members of the public or other agencies, it does not cover the raising of issues and/or complaints from Foodbank employees, which is covered in the Grievances Policy.

4 WEFB's Approach to Handling Complaints

The Charity undertakes to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as straightforward as possible.
- Complaints are dealt with promptly, courteously, and discreetly – confidentially when appropriate.
- WEFB will respond decisively with an explanation, an apology where we have been at fault, or information on the outcome.
- WEFB will learn from complaints and use them to make improvements in the way WEFB work.
- WEFB anticipate that the majority of complaints can be dealt with informally, but in cases in which a formal procedure is more appropriate, WEFB request that the following complaints procedure is followed.

5 Complaints Procedure

WEFB request that complaints are submitted in the following format:

- In writing, addressed FAO the Chief Executive at the Newcastle West End Foodbank, The Foodbank Centre, Benwell Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE15 6LX or by email to john@nclwehb.org.uk with 'complaint' in the subject line.
- The complaint should include a full explanation of what occurred, when and where the occurrence took place, how it occurred, and the effect on the person(s) involved, any witness details and copies of any witness statements together with a description of what the complainant thinks WEFB should do to put things right.

WEFB will deal with the complaint as follows:

1. WEFB will acknowledge the complaint within five working days of receipt and provide the complainant with the name and contact details of the person responsible for investigating the matter.
2. The person responsible for the investigation will respond in writing with their findings and proposed resolution within twenty-eight days from receipt of the complaint*.
3. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation they may appeal: letters must be received within twenty-one working days of the date on the correspondence notifying the complainant of the outcome of the first investigation.
4. The complaint will be reinvestigated and the complainant will be informed of the outcome within 10 working days*.

* unless the complaint is particularly complex or time-consuming, in which case the complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and notified of the expected date of completion.

6 Other information

Complaints about staff behaviour or attitude will be handled by the line manager of the staff member in question, and in accordance with the Charity's Disciplinary Procedure if appropriate.

The complainant will not be given details of the action WEFB have taken, as such information is confidential.

If the complaint is an operational matter and not involving the CEO then that is where the final decision will rest. If the complaint relates to the CEO then responsibility for overseeing the process and related outcome will pass to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

If the complaint relates to a Trustee then the responsibility for overseeing the process and related outcome will pass to the Governance sub-group, unless the complaint concerns a member of the Governance sub-group, in which case it will pass the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

7 Anonymous Complaints

If a complainant wishes to make a complaint anonymously or does not provide contact details, then WEFB will treat it as a comment and will be unable to advise the complainant of the outcome of the investigation.

8 Abusive Complaints

If a complaint contains abusive or offensive language, then WEFB reserve the right not to respond. WEFB reserve the right to report any such communication to the Police.

9 Data Privacy Statement

WEFB collate and analyse data about complaints so that we can improve the services we provide. WEFB will collect personal information including the complainant's name and contact details, including postal address, telephone number, email address and social media contact information, to be able to communicate with them about their complaint. WEFB will also collect sufficient information about the situation concerned to be able to understand what has happened. WEFB may need to request further information depending on the nature of the complaint. WEFB have a legitimate interest in holding this information to be able to monitor and improve our services.

Information gathered is accessed by WEFB employees and may be shared with advice agencies or professional services firms only if appropriate, for example if the complaint relates to safeguarding and WEFB seek guidance as to next steps.

Where a complaint involves third party agencies in our network, WEFB may need to share this information with them to understand what has happened and determine a resolution. WEFB keep this information for two years after the complaint has been closed, unless there is a requirement to keep it longer, in which case WEFB will inform the complainant of this. After this time, the data will be aggregated and anonymised.

10 Equality and Diversity

WEFB is committed to ensuring that it treats its clients, employees and volunteers fairly equitably and reasonably and that it does not discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of their ethnic origin, physical or mental abilities, gender, age, religious beliefs or sexual orientation. This policy has been appropriately assessed.

11 Monitoring and Compliance

WEFB will maintain effective monitoring systems to ensure implementation of this policy, including the following:

| Standard/ process / issue | Monitoring and audit | | | |
|--|----------------------|-----|---------------|--|
| | Method: | By: | Reporting to: | Frequency: |
| Report of any complaints received and resolutions achieved (where appropriate) | Report | CEO | Trustees | Next Board of Trustees meeting following complaint |
| Audit of complaints received, changes made, lessons learned and any recurring themes or issues identified in the preceding 12 months | Audit | CEO | Trustees | Annually |

12 Amendments Table

| Version | Effective From | Date of Review | Changes made |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| 1.0 | 16 September 2020 | xx September 2022 | None – Initial version |
| 2.0 | xx September 2022 | xx September 2024 | Inclusion in para 6 of actions to be taken if the complaint concerns a Trustee. |