



Complaints Policy and Procedures

Date Adopted: 27th May 2026

Next Review Date: 27th May 2027

Policy Review: This policy will be reviewed by the trustees every year or sooner if legal guidance changes.

1. Policy Statement

The Trustees of The West Kent Badger Group are responsible for ensuring the charity operates in a manner that is lawful, accountable, and in the best interests of its beneficiaries.

In accordance with guidance from the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Trustees are committed to:

- Maintaining high standards of governance and conduct
- Acting with reasonable care and skill
- Managing complaints in a fair, transparent, and timely manner
- Learning from complaints to improve the West Kent Badger Group's work
- Protecting the West Kent Badger Group's reputation and public trust

This policy provides a clear and accessible framework for handling complaints.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy operates in line with:

- The Charities Act 2011
- The West Kent Badger Group's governing document
- Charity Commission guidance on trustee duties (including CC3 – The Essential Trustee)
- Applicable data protection legislation
- Relevant safeguarding legislation (where applicable)

Trustees retain ultimate responsibility for ensuring complaints are handled appropriately and proportionately.

3. What Is a Complaint?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about:

- The conduct or behaviour of trustees, staff, or volunteers
 - The West Kent Badger Group's activities, services, or decisions
 - Administrative processes
 - Fundraising activities
 - Failure to follow policies or stated standards
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4. What This Policy Does Not Cover

This policy does not replace:

- The Safeguarding Policy (for safeguarding concerns)
- Matters subject to active legal proceedings

Safeguarding concerns will be escalated immediately in accordance with statutory guidance.

5. Principles for Handling Complaints

The West Kent Badger Group will ensure that complaints are:

- **Accessible** – clear routes for raising concerns
- **Fair and impartial** – free from bias or conflicts of interest
- **Proportionate** – appropriate to the seriousness of the issue
- **Confidential** – handled sensitively
- **Timely** – addressed within reasonable timeframes
- **Recorded** – properly documented for governance oversight

Trustees will ensure no complainant is treated unfavourably for raising a legitimate concern.

6. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints may be made:

- In writing (email or letter)
- By telephone
- In person

The complaint should include:

- Name and contact details

- Full details of the issue
- Relevant dates and evidence
- Desired resolution

Anonymous complaints will be considered at the Trustees' discretion, though investigation may be limited.

7. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, complaints should first be raised with the relevant staff member or volunteer.

- Aim to resolve within **10 working days**
 - Outcome confirmed verbally or in writing
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Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If unresolved, or where the matter is serious, the complaint should be submitted in writing to the **Chair of Trustees**.

Upon receipt:

- Acknowledgement within **5 working days**
- Investigation conducted by a trustee not directly involved
- Written response within **20 working days**

The response will include:

- Summary of findings
 - Any corrective action taken
 - Reasons for the decision
 - Information on further escalation
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Stage 3 – Trustee Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied:

- A written request for review must be submitted within **14 days**
- A panel of trustees (with no prior involvement) will review the case
- A final written decision will be issued within **20 working days**

The Board's decision will be final within the West Kent Badger Group's internal process.

8. Reporting Serious Incidents

If a complaint reveals a serious governance issue, financial irregularity, safeguarding concern, or significant risk to the West Kent Badger Group's reputation or beneficiaries, the Trustees will consider whether a **Serious Incident Report** must be submitted to the Charity Commission in accordance with regulatory guidance.

Trustees will exercise their duty to act in the West Kent Badger Group's best interests and protect charitable assets.

9. External Escalation

If a complainant is dissatisfied after exhausting this procedure, they may contact:

- The Charity Commission for England and Wales (for concerns about regulatory compliance or trustee misconduct)
- The Fundraising Regulator (for fundraising complaints, where applicable)

The Charity Commission does not normally investigate individual service complaints but may consider serious governance concerns.

10. Record Keeping and Oversight

The Trustees will:

- Maintain a confidential Complaints Register
- Record nature, outcome, and actions taken
- Review complaints annually to identify patterns or risks
- Report significant issues to the full Board

Complaint records will be retained in line with data protection requirements.

11. Vexatious or Persistent Complaints

The Trustees may decline to investigate complaints that are:

- Malicious or abusive
- Repetitive without new evidence
- Disproportionately burdensome

Such decisions will be documented and justified.