



# External Complaints Policy

Purpose of Agreement	The purpose of this policy is to describe the Veterans Outreach Support procedure regarding managing concerns and complaints.
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## **External Complaints Procedure**

Veterans Outreach Support (VOS) welcomes feedback on any aspect of our work, including complaints, comments, compliments and suggestions. We are committed to providing the best possible experience to all individuals and stakeholders who engage with our services and activities.

This policy covers complaints only.

### **Who is covered by this procedure?**

All beneficiaries, associates and third parties using VOS products and services.

### **What is covered by this procedure?**

This procedure covers how to deal with complaints from customers, associates and third parties and explains what steps need to be taken to ensure effective complaint handling.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that no person coming into contact with VOS ever feels that they have not had an excellent experience or that their feedback or complaint has not been taken seriously and dealt with empathetically and efficiently.

Feedback from customers, associates and third parties and how we deal with it is invaluable in helping us to continuously improve. Negative feedback and complaints are particularly helpful in pinpointing what we need to do better and if, we deal with complaints effectively, we can often improve our relationships with customers and associates overall.

### **How to make a complaint**

Complaints can be made in a variety of ways:

- Via the 'contact us' button on the website ([www.vosuk.org](http://www.vosuk.org))
- Emailing [admin@vosuk.org](mailto:admin@vosuk.org) FAO Care Manager
- Contacting the Care Manager by post: Veterans Outreach Support c/o Royal Maritime Hotel, 75-80 Queens Street, Portsmouth, PO1 3HS

## **The complaints procedure**

Complaints may be received by any member of staff, volunteer or trustee and may arrive in many different forms, for example: by letter or email; by comments on a feedback form; in person from a delegate, speaker, trainer, or customer; by phone; or via social media.

The VOS Complaint Form (Complete Parts 1 and 2 of Appendix A) and email it to the Care Manager. Use the name of the complainant and date as the file name.

VOS has a 3 stage complaints procedure:

### **Stage 1: Local Resolution**

- Upon receiving a complaint, VOS will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days of receipt.
- Wherever possible, complaints will be resolved swiftly and informally by the relevant manager. If the manager is involved in the complaint, VOS will ask another independent manager.
- Where a safeguarding concern is raised via a complaint process, VOS Safeguarding Adults and Children's policy will be followed. The VOS Designated Safeguarding Lead will talk about this with you if your complaint involves a safeguarding issue.
- It is our aim that all Stage 1 'local resolution' complaints will be resolved within 10 working days after we receive the complaint. If we are unable to resolve the complaint in this timeframe, we will tell you as quickly as possible and let you know when you can expect to hear from us.

### **Stage 2: Appeal**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 complaint, please write to us to tell us why you are unhappy within 14 days of receiving written notification of the Stage 1 outcome.

A relevant independent staff member (appointed by the Manager in charge of the work area) will be assigned to resolve the complaint appeal. This will initially involve considering reasons for the appeal and deciding if further review is required.

If further review (known as an 'investigation') is required, an investigating officer will be appointed. We aim to complete the investigation as quickly as possible. We will keep you informed as our investigation progresses and tell you how long we estimate the process will take.

We will give you our decision in relation to the appeal, including any findings and conclusions which led to the decision, in writing, within 25 working days of receipt. If the investigation is still ongoing at this point, an update will be provided.

### **Stage 3: Escalation**

If you are not satisfied with the resolution, please write and tell us within 7 days of receiving the written Stage 2 decision notification. We will request a Trustee Review.

### **Timescale**

Under regular circumstances, the complaint process should be completed within the timescales highlighted in the 3-stage process. If the complaint is complex and cannot be dealt with within this timescale, the complainant should be updated regularly with progression on their complaint.

### **Options after appeal**

The Charity Commission regulates registered charities in England and Wales. They make sure that charities are accountable, well-run, and meet their legal obligations. The Charity Commission will receive complaints related to suspected serious abuse or illegal activity at a charity. Further information is available using this link: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

Any VOS supporter making a complaint about our fundraising activities, who is dissatisfied with the outcome or response times, can (after four weeks from making an initial complaint) refer their complaint to the Fundraising Regulator via telephone on 0300 999 3407 or web form <https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints/make-complaint>. If you have a complaint about the way you have been asked for donations or how fundraisers have behaved, a complaint can also be made to the Fundraising Regulator.

The Information Commissioners Office is The UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, making people aware about their data protection and information rights. If you have a concern about VOS information rights practices, you can report it directly via telephone on 0303 123 1113 or on their website: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

If you are dissatisfied with the VOS complaints process, you can contact the Charity Commission, who will be able to advise on whether they may be able to advise on the matter. The Charity Commission can be contacted at: <https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/>

## **Confidentiality, GDPR and data protection**

This policy complies with the requirements of The Equality Act (2010) and is in accordance with VOS commitment to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion.

We will only tell those people involved in resolving your complaint about it. Sometimes we may need to share your complaint or concerns with other individuals to understand the situation fully.

After the complaint is resolved, we will keep a summary on record, using relevant data protection protocols. If you use our services and have a file, the complaint record will be placed on your file.

We use anonymised information from complaints to make sure we learn and improve our services.

**(END)**

**Appendix A****Veterans Outreach Support Complaint Form**

This form is to be completed for all complaints received by whatever means (including in writing, by email, in person or by phone). Please attach copies of any written correspondence to this form when complete and send it to the Care Manager.

**Part 1: Complainant Details**

Name		Job Title	
Organisation		Phone Number	
Address		Email Address	

Complaint Received by		Date Received	
		Received via	

Is this a safeguarding concern: Yes/No	Has the Safeguarding Lead been informed: Yes/No
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**Part 2: Details of problem:**

*Please provide full details of the nature of the problem (ensure you include all facts clearly).*

**Part 3: Details of problem resolution:**

*Please detail how we plan to resolve the issue with the customer.*

<b>Completed by (name):</b>	<b>Dates Completed:</b>
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