

Global complaints policy

Sightsavers is committed to upholding the principles of transparency and accountability as being at the core of good governance. Within this context, ensuring that stakeholders can hold the organisation to account through an effective process for recording and responding to complaints is essential to improving the quality of work in all areas of operation. This document sets out the procedures that Sightsavers will follow globally in the management of complaints.

When does the policy apply?

The complaints policy is intended to be used by supporters, partners, beneficiaries and members of the public (individual, company or other entity).

The complaints policy does not apply to complaints that are subject to current investigation by any regulatory body or other legal or official authorities in the UK or other countries in which Sightsavers' operates. For instance, a complaint which is currently being reviewed by the UK Charity Commission. Such issues will be dealt with under the relevant regulatory regime.

Definition of a complaint

Sightsavers defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction made to the organisation, related to its activity or lack of activity, or the complaint-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. The following are examples of complaints (this list is not exhaustive):

- Concern about the quality of Sightsavers' programme delivery;
- Concern from a supporter about a particular fundraising approach;
- Concern about a lack of action regarding a request made to Sightsavers;
- Concern about the behaviour of Sightsavers' staff.

Principles of complaint handling

In producing this policy, Sightsavers has acted to ensure that its procedures for complaints handling follow the principles expressed in the UN's "Protect, Respect and Remedy" framework. This is available at the following location:

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf

In handling complaints, Sightsavers will uphold the following principles:

- a) Respect for person's right to complain – Sightsavers will take all complaints seriously and will treat all complainants with respect.
- b) Timely – Complaints will be investigated and responded to in a timely manner. Sightsavers will keep complainants informed of the progress of their complaint.
- c) Open and transparent – Sightsavers will provide clear information regarding the process for handling complaints and for any decisions reached.

- d) Fair – Each complaint is addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner through the complaints-handling process.
- e) Privacy – Sightsavers will limit the circulation of the specific details of the complaint to those who need to know to respond.
- f) Responsive – Where Sightsavers investigation shows that actions are required as a result of complaints, these will be implemented.
- g) Feedback – Complainants have the right to provide feedback on Sightsavers response and will be informed of the processes for doing this.

Procedures for complaint handling

How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made to Sightsavers verbally or in writing. Verbal complaints can be made using the telephone. Written complaints can be submitted by post or email. Complainants should identify themselves within their complaint. Sightsavers will treat a complaint as confidential if requested but will not respond to anonymous complaints.

Who should a complaint be addressed to

The addressee for a complaint is different depending on the nature of the complaint being made. This is for practical reasons, to ensure that everyone is able to effectively make a complaint to Sightsavers.

Complaints relating to Sightsavers' programme work in a particular country should be directed to Sightsavers' Country Director. If the complainant does not want to make the complaint to the Country Director then complaints should be directed to the Head Office, as below.

All other complaints should be addressed to "Sightsavers Complaints" at the Head Office contact details. These contact details are given in Appendix 1.

What information should a complaint include

Every complaint should include the name and contact details of the person making it. Full details should be provided of the issue being complained about along with any documentation or correspondence which is required to understand the complaint being made.

What happens after a complaint is made

Complaints will be passed to the relevant manager or senior manager with responsibility for the area being complained about. They will investigate the circumstances surrounding the issue being complained about and provide a response to it.

Sightsavers will acknowledge all complaints within 14 days of receipt and will tell the complainant of the outcome of its investigation within 30 days of receiving the complaint. In the event that an investigation cannot be completed within this timeframe the complainant will be informed, in writing, about when they can expect a full response.

What should I do if I am unhappy with Sightsavers response

In the event of a complainant being dissatisfied with the response from Sightsavers to their complaint they may write to the Chief Executive of Sightsavers who will consider what action should be taken and inform the complainant about what further action may

or may not be taken. All complainants have the right of appeal to the Chair of Trustees, who can be contacted at the Head Office address.

Sightsavers is regulated in England and Wales by the Charity Commission. Complaints can be made to them via their web site at www.charitycommission.gov.uk.

Sightsavers is a member of the Fundraising Standards Board. If you are unhappy regarding Sightsavers response to a complaint regarding a fundraising initiative, you can escalate this to the Fundraising Standards Board within two months of Sightsavers response via their web site www.frsb.org.uk or you can contact them at:

Fundraising Standards Board, 65 Brushfield Street, London, E1 6AA

Telephone: 0333 321 8803

Sightsavers advertising activities are also regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority. Complaints can be made to them via their web site at www.asa.org.uk or you can contact them at:

Advertising Standards Authority, Mid City Place, 71 High Holborn, London WC1V 6QT

Telephone: 020 7492 2222

Sightsavers is also a member of the INGO Accountability Charter. The Independent Review Panel of the Charter organisation provides oversight of members' internal complaints handling and instances of dissatisfaction can be referred to them. The full details of the Charter complaints handling process are available on the web site at www.ingoaccountabilitycharter.org.

When will Sightsavers not respond to a complaint

Everyone who makes a complaint to Sightsavers will be treated with courtesy and respect. In return, Sightsavers expects people who make a complaint to make their concerns fairly and appropriately. Where complainants harass staff, behave abusively, or unreasonably pursue complaints, Sightsavers reserves the right to withdraw or modify its complaints process. A decision about what constitutes a persistent, habitual or vexatious complaint will be taken by the Director responsible for the area complained about.

Any complaint must be made as soon as possible, when the events causing the complaint are still fresh.

Review of the policy and findings

Sightsavers will review the policy on an annual basis to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. Sightsavers will review its log of complaints on a quarterly basis to identify any common issues requiring action.

Publicising this policy

This policy will be made available to all stakeholders via Sightsavers' website at www.sightsavers.org.

Individual arrangements for publicising this policy in the different countries in which Sightsavers works will be made by the relevant Country Director. These arrangements will ensure that all stakeholders and not just partners and beneficiaries with whom Sightsavers works will be able to make a complaint under this policy.

Appendix 1: Contact details

Head Office
Complaints Handling
35 Perrymount Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 3BW

Email: complaints@sightsavers.org
Telephone: +44 (0)1444 446600