

Global complaints policy

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Global Complaints Policy

Sightsavers is committed to upholding the principles of transparency and accountability as being at the core of good governance. Ensuring that stakeholders can hold the organisation to account through an effective complaints process is essential to improve the quality of our work. We listen to all complaints and treat them as opportunities to improve. This document sets out the procedures that Sightsavers follows globally to manage complaints.

When does the policy apply?

The complaints policy is intended for use by supporters, partners, beneficiaries and the public (individuals, companies or other entities). It should not be used to raise employee complaints. Internal employment policies are in place to handle employment issues, including, but not limited to, the grievance policy, harassment policy and whistleblowing policy, which can be found via this link:

<https://www.sightsavers.org/how-were-run/accountability-and-transparency>

The complaints policy does not apply to complaints that are subject to current investigation by any regulatory body (for example, a complaint that is currently being reviewed by the UK Charity Commission) or other legal or official authorities in the UK or other countries in which Sightsavers operates. 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 expected.

The following are examples of complaints (this list is not exhaustive):

- Concern about the quality of Sightsavers' programme delivery or outcome
- 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 ensures that its procedures for complaints handling follow the principles expressed in the UN's 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' framework, available online at:

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

In handling complaints, Sightsavers will uphold the following principles:

- **Respect for person's right to complain:** Sightsavers will take all complaints seriously and will treat all complainants with courtesy and respect.
- **Timely:** Complaints will be fully investigated and responded to in a timely manner. Sightsavers will keep complainants informed of the progress of their complaint.
- **Open and transparent:** Sightsavers will ensure that making a complaint is as easy and transparent as possible.
- **Fair:** Each complaint will be addressed in an equitable, objective, and unbiased manner through the complaints-handling process.
- **Privacy:** Sightsavers will limit the circulation of the specific details of the complaint to those who need to know.
- **Responsive:** We will work hard to correct problems and address concerns in a way that pleases the complainant.
- **Feedback:** Complainants have the right to provide feedback on Sightsavers' response and will be informed of the processes for doing this.
- **Confidentiality:** Some complaints need to be kept confidential to safeguard those making or involved in the complaint. However, in some instances we might judge that the complainant will be better served if others are involved in the resolution of a complaint. Third parties will only be included in the resolution of confidential complaints if the law requires it, or on a case by-case basis and with the agreement of the complainant.
- **Accessibility:** We will make communication as easy as possible. We will assist all parties to ensure equality of representation.

Procedures for complaint handling

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint in whichever way is most convenient to you. Our Supporter Care team is always ready and willing to listen. Verbal complaints can be made by phone. Written complaints can be submitted by post or email. Sightsavers will treat a complaint as confidential while listening to you, keeping you informed about the progress of the complaint and providing you with a prompt response.

Who should a complaint be addressed to?

Complaints relating to Sightsavers' programme work in a particular country should be directed to Sightsavers' country director by emailing complaints@sightsavers.org and listing the country the complaint originated in the subject title. If the complainant does not want to make the complaint to the country director, complaints should be directed to the head office, as below.

All other complaints should be addressed to 'Sightsavers Complaints' at the UK office contact details:

Sightsavers Complaints Handling
35 Perrymount Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 3BW
UK

Email: complaints@sightsavers.org

What information should a complaint include?

Full details should be provided of the issue being complained about, along with any relevant documentation or correspondence that is required to understand the complaint being made.

Any complaint should be made as soon as feasibly possible following the events causing the issue of concern. Where possible the complainant should try to remember the details surrounding the issue, including names of people where necessary and a timeline of events to help with the investigation.

The complainant should be aware that it might not always be possible to investigate a complaint in full if we have been informed a long time after the issue and/or have not been given enough details to make a full and fair report. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking circumstances and any relevant factors into account.

What happens after a complaint is reported?

Complaints will be passed to the relevant manager with responsibility for the area being complained about. They will investigate the circumstances surrounding the issue and provide a response, including any escalation if applicable. Managers should produce an implementation plan for any improvements identified.

Sightsavers will acknowledge all complaints within 14 days of receipt and will inform 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, 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 online at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission

Sightsavers is registered with the Fundraising Regulator. If you are unhappy with Sightsavers' response to a complaint about a fundraising initiative, you can escalate this to the Fundraising Regulator within two months of Sightsavers' response, via www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk or contact:

Fundraising Regulator
2nd floor
CAN Mezzanine Building
49-51 East Road
London N1 6AH

Telephone: 0300 999 3407

Sightsavers' advertising activities are also regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority. Complaints can be made online at www.asa.org.uk or by contacting:

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

Telephone: 020 7492 2222

Sightsavers is also a member of Accountable Now (formerly the INGO Accountability Charter). The organisation's Independent Review Panel provides oversight of members' internal complaints handling, and instances of dissatisfaction can be referred to the panel. Full details are available at www.accountablenow.org/accountability-in-practice

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.

Complaints via social media

We use internal guidelines to decide how to deal with negative comments and complaints made on Sightsavers' social media channels. The guidance outlines how we speak on social media, what we do and do not react to, and what to do when an issue requires escalation to senior management. It must be followed by any member of staff responsible for managing a Sightsavers social media channel.

We share all complaints and responses with Supporter Care, who decide whether they should be logged within their systems.

Review of the policy and findings

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

Publicising this policy

This policy will be 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.

We work with partners in low and middle income countries to eliminate avoidable blindness and promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

www.sightsavers.org