



Complaints policy and procedures

Date ratified: 01/01/2024

Approved by: CEO and Board of Trustees

Date last reviewed: MAS 04-12-24

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, transparent, and accessible procedure for individuals to raise complaints about the charity's activities, services, or conduct.

MS Together is committed to resolving complaints promptly, fairly, and professionally, ensuring that all complaints are taken seriously and addressed in line with best practices.

1. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all complaints received by MS Together, including complaints from:

- Beneficiaries: Individuals who benefit from the charity's services or programs.
- Donors: Individuals or organizations who provide funding or support to the charity.
- Volunteers and Staff: Individuals who work with or for the charity.
- Members of the public and beneficiaries: Anyone who has a concern or issue regarding the charity's activities.

This policy covers complaints about:

- Service delivery or the quality of services.
- Behaviour or conduct of staff, volunteers, or representatives.
- Financial management or fundraising practices.
- Organizational policies, processes, or communications.

This policy does not cover:

- Decisions made by MS Together's CEO, or Board of Trustees (which are final).
- Matters already subject to legal action or regulatory investigation.
- Complaints that are malicious, vexatious, or repetitive (see section 6).

2. Complaints Procedure

MS Together aims to resolve complaints in a fair and timely manner. The procedure is as follows:

Step 1: Informal Resolution

- Encouragement of Early Resolution:
 - We encourage individuals to address their complaints informally with the relevant person or team member in the first instance (e.g., the staff member or volunteer involved).
 - Most complaints can be resolved quickly and effectively at this early stage through discussion or clarification.



- Timeframe:
 - Issues raised informally should be resolved as soon as possible, ideally within 5 working days of the complaint being raised.

Step 2: Formal Complaint

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the complainant can make a formal complaint. To initiate the formal complaints process, the following steps should be taken:

- Submission of Complaint:
 - Complaints should be submitted in writing via email to the CEO at MS Together (amy.thompson@mstogether.org). The complaint should include:
 - A clear description of the issue or concern.
 - The name and contact details of the complainant.
 - Any relevant information or evidence (e.g., dates, times, witnesses).
- Acknowledgement of Receipt:
 - The charity will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within 5 working days.

Step 3: Investigation of Complaint

- Review and Assessment:
 - The complaint will be reviewed by the CEO, a Trustee, or another appropriate person. The investigation may include:
 - Reviewing the details of the complaint.
 - Interviewing the complainant and any relevant witnesses or individuals involved.
 - Gathering any supporting documentation or evidence.
- Timescale for Resolution:
 - The investigation will be completed and a formal response provided within 20 working days of receiving the formal complaint. In complex cases, this period may be extended, and the complainant will be informed of any delays.

Step 4: Outcome and Resolution

- Communication of Decision:
 - The complainant will receive a written response outlining the decision, actions taken, and measures to prevent recurrence (if relevant).
- Appeals Process:
 - If dissatisfied, the complainant may appeal in writing to the Chair of Trustees.
 - The Board of Trustees will review and provide a final written decision within 10 working days. The decision of the Board is final.

3. Confidentiality

- All complaints will be treated confidentially, with information shared only with those involved in the investigation or resolution process.
- Personal details of the complainant and any individuals involved will be kept secure and used only for the purpose of resolving the complaint.



- In cases where a complaint involves serious allegations (e.g., safeguarding concerns), the charity will follow legal and regulatory requirements for reporting and disclosure, aligned with the Safeguarding Policy.

4. Monitoring and Reporting

- Record Keeping:
 - All complaints (informal and formal) will be logged and recorded securely.
- Annual Review:
 - The Board of Trustees will receive an annual report summarising complaints and resolutions.

5. Responsibilities

- Staff and Volunteers: All staff and volunteers are required to understand the complaints process and direct any complaints to the appropriate person in the charity.
- CEO: The CEO has responsibility for managing complaints in line with this policy.
- Board of Trustees: The Board is responsible for overseeing the complaints process and ensuring that complaints are handled in a transparent and fair manner.

6. Vexatious Complaints

- MS Together reserves the right not to investigate complaints that are malicious, vexatious, repetitive, or unfounded.
 - This includes complaints intended to harass, disrupt, or undermine the charity, or complaints made repeatedly without reasonable cause.
 - The decision not to investigate will be communicated in writing to the complainant.

7. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed at least once every two years to ensure it is still relevant and effective. Any changes will be communicated to staff, volunteers, and stakeholders.