



Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

This document sets out the Royal Berks Charity's (**rbc**) policy for recognising and dealing with complaints. It sets out the procedure to be followed by those wishing to make a complaint and explains how we will respond. The policy covers complaints about any area of **rbc's** work and reflects our commitment to the Fundraising Code and the Fundraising Promise.

We recognise that occasionally people may be dissatisfied or concerned about their interactions with **rbc**; we hope that problems can be reconciled between the parties concerned. If not, then we will deal with any complaint promptly, thoroughly, impartially and sympathetically. All complaints will be dealt with in strictest confidence.

Fundraising is performed both by employees of **rbc**, employees of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, and selected third parties on our behalf. This policy will apply equally to complaints directly concerning **rbc** and those relating to fundraising on its behalf.

The policy aims to offer redress to substantiated complaints and to enable us to revise and review our practices and correct any shortcomings that are within our control in response to concerns.

The policy applies to all staff and Trustee Board members who may find themselves required to receive, initially respond to, investigate and/or resolve a complaint and ensure that leanings are acted upon and procedures revised and implemented to avoid further complaints in future.

2. Background

An effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships with the people on whom **rbc** depends. Handling complaints transparently and well:

- Demonstrates our commitment to our donors and other stakeholders
- Demonstrates our commitment to providing the best possible service
- Helps us to find out about things that may have gone wrong so we can fix them
- Helps us to prevent things going wrong in the future.

The **rbc** seeks to constantly improve its service to donors, supporters and members of the public and ensure our policy adheres to best practice. We always aim to treat all our donors and supporters with the highest level of care and respect. However, we recognise that on occasion we may not meet their expectations or our own high standards.

Although a few complaints may be vexatious and/or unfounded, the majority are made because the person making the complaint actually cares about **rbc**. We understand that a person's perceptions cannot be wrong. We will respond to how a person has perceived the situation. It is far better to receive a complaint, handle it well and thereby ensure a happy supporter than to lose donors by not taking their concerns seriously.

Without complaints we can often fail to appreciate our own shortcomings, so they are an important part of our supporter care service.

3. Definitions

The British Standard (BS8543) definition of a complaint is: “an expression of dissatisfaction whether justified or not”. It can be defined further as “an expression of dissatisfaction, written (by post or email) or verbal (by telephone or face to face), which requires investigation, action (if appropriate) and/or follow up verbally or in writing.”

The Fundraising Regulator’s Code of Fundraising Practice states (1.6):

- a) Organisations **MUST** have a complaints procedure, which **MUST** also apply to any Third Parties fundraising on their behalf.
- b) Organisations **MUST** respond to any complaints from donors, beneficiaries or other parties in a timely, respectful, open and honest way.
- c) Organisations **MUST** ensure that the learnings from any complaints are acted upon.

Reasons for making a complaint might include:

- A failure of an activity, service or system which affects an individual or a group of people, causing inconvenience, upset or loss
- Marketing/fundraising collateral which is misleading, inaccurate or has caused upset or offence
- Personal contact with a staff member or representative of **rbc** which was inaccurate or misleading or which has caused upset or offence.

The following would not be treated as complaints:

- A simple request for removal from **rbc’s** database
- A request for other data markers to be removed or corrected
- A change of address
- A comment or remark with no response expected/required.

Complaints related to the delivery of treatment and care by the Trust are not covered by this policy. All such complaints must be made to the Trust using its own complaints policy and process.

All complaints should be registered within one month of the event leading to the complaint or of you becoming aware of a cause for complaint. However, we recognise that each case needs to be judged individually, and for complaints that fall outside of the time limits, **rbc** may exercise its discretion to apply the complaints procedure.

4. Confidentiality and Anonymity

Complainants are entitled to remain anonymous if they prefer. However, we do suggest that they give us their name and contact details so that we can fully investigate the complaint and report back.

Any personal details will be kept fully confidential, in accordance with data protection legislation, and only be shown to people who need to see them in order to investigate the complaint.

5. Advocates / Representatives

We are happy to receive a complaint through an advocate or representative, if they know full details relating to the case. If someone else writes the complaint on the complainant's behalf the complainant should sign the report to confirm that the contents are accurate and true.

6. Informal Complaints

If an informal complaint is made (i.e. verbally, bringing a matter to our attention but not wanting to make a formal complaint), we will respond verbally within seven working days, either in a face-to-face meeting or telephone conversation. This will be recorded for our records, but we will not give a written response (unless we are specifically asked for one). All formal complaints will receive a full, written response. In either case, complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly.

7. The rbc's complaints procedure

7.1 Our Policy aims to:

- provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use
- publicise our complaints procedure so that people know how to make a complaint
- make sure that all complaints are investigated in a timely way
- make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved quickly, fairly and effectively and that relationships are repaired
- gather information which helps us to improve what we do

7.2 Stage 1

- 7.2.1 A complaint can be communicated to **rbc** by any channel including telephone, mail, email and social media or in person.
- 7.2.2 On receiving a complaint, by whatever means, this will be recorded on the **rbc's** complaints log and the Charity Complaints Officer will be informed. The log entry will include the name and contact details of the complainant and their relationship with **rbc** (for example: donor, event participant or volunteer) together with details of the nature of their complaint and the date of the incident giving rise to it.
- 7.2.3 A letter will be sent to the complainant as soon as possible but certainly within two working days to confirm that the complaint will be investigated and to

outline the complaints procedure and explain the process. During this period, the complainant may be asked to provide further information if this is required.

- 7.2.4 The complaint will be investigated by the Complaints Officer (and not by any person named or involved in the complaint). The outcome will be approved by the relevant line manager.
- 7.2.5 A formal response will be sent within 10 working days of the complaint being received. If this is not a final report then the response will indicate progress so far and give a likely timescale within which a full response will be issued.
- 7.2.6 Our full response will include facts that we have been able to establish through our investigation, whilst also identifying any conflicts of interest. During our investigation we will talk to all parties and any witnesses to any incident. We will then outline whether we believe the complaint to be justified and any proposals to address upheld concerns. We will always make an apology where that is appropriate.
- 7.2.7 We hope that we will resolve the issue satisfactorily for all parties concerned. However if the complainant is dissatisfied with the response or with the way the complaint has been handled, the response will make clear that they should then contact **rbc** again.
- 7.2.8 Most complaints should be resolved at this stage. It is often better for the person responsible for the issue being complained about to resolve the complaint.
- 7.2.9 If the complainant gets back in touch because they are still not happy, then the case will be escalated to Stage 2 and the complainant should be informed that this is the case.

7.3 Stage 2

- 7.3.1 At this stage, the complaint should be escalated to the Charity Director, with copies of all correspondence and case documentation. The Charity Director will then decide whether or not to uphold the response of **rbc**.
- 7.3.2 Within 10 days, the Charity Director will write to the complainant with this final decision and the reasons for it. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe what action will be taken as a result of the complaint.
- 7.3.3 If the complainant is still not happy, then the case will be escalated to Stage 3 and the complainant should be informed that this is the case

7.4 Stage 3

- 7.4.1 At this stage, the complaint will be escalated to the Chair of the Trustee Board, with copies of all correspondence and case documentation. The Chair of the Trustee Board will consider all the facts afresh and then decide what the final response of **rbc** will be.
- 7.4.2 Within 10 days, the Chair of the Trustee Board will write to the complainant with this final decision and the reasons for it.

- 7.4.3 This decision will be final. However, the complainant may contact the Charity Commission or the Fundraising Regulator for further advice if they are still unhappy.

7.5 Handling Verbal Complaints

Complaints are often verbal, usually on the phone. These can be quite difficult for the complainant and the recipient of the call. We will aim to:

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen – allowing the complainant to “let off steam” in their own words
- Not enter into a debate or discussion about the merits of the complaint
- Show an interest
- Ask for clarification if needed
- Show that we have understood the complaint by confirming it back
- Acknowledge the strength of feeling of the complainant without forming a judgement about its merits before it has been investigated
- If it is obvious that an apology is warranted, then we will apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about the procedure, how long it will take and what is involved
- Not promise anything that cannot be delivered
- Thank the person for taking the time to contact **rbc** and stress how seriously we treat all feedback

7.6 How complaints will be recorded and used constructively

All complaints we receive are recorded in a Complaints Log which will include:

- Date complaint received
- Date of incident complained of
- Brief description of incident
- Preferred method of contact
- Nature / category of complaint
- Date investigation concluded
- Outcomes, actions or learning that results

A summary of the log will be reviewed periodically by the Board of Trustees to assess the nature and extent of complaints made in the period, how they were resolved, and to discuss any actions required to prevent similar incidents occurring in the future.

The **rbc** will always engage with complaints constructively and aim to make necessary improvements or put in place required training in order to prevent similar issues occurring in the future.

7.7 Malicious Complaints

The **rbc** will accept any complaint in good faith. However, complaints made on the basis of discrimination, or malicious or vexatious complaints will not be tolerated. In order to protect its employees **rbc** will investigate such complaints in a manner so as to expose such malicious intent. This will not apply to genuine complainants.

7.8 Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Trustee Board periodically (approximately every three years) as part of the on-going cyclical review of all **rbc** policies.

Annex A: Supporter Commitment (Complaints Procedure Statement)

At Royal Berks Charity we are committed to delivering a high standard of service. Your views are very important to us and we take any feedback we receive very seriously. We treat all comments and complaints as an opportunity to improve. If you are unhappy with any aspect of our work, we'd like to hear about it. We appreciate the opportunity this feedback gives us to learn and improve and are happy to acknowledge any mistakes that we have made, sincerely apologise for them and then try to prevent them from happening again in the future. Thank you for helping us to provide a better service.

Our Policy

Where a complaint or expression of dissatisfaction is received:

- Complaints are acknowledged speedily and recorded
- Complaints are dealt with in a consistent, appropriate, fair and timely manner without bias: the facts are established, any evidence is obtained and recorded and a response is prepared, reviewed and communicated to you
- Complaints are, wherever possible, resolved quickly, fairly and effectively and relationships are repaired: a full explanation and an apology (when appropriate) will be included in our reply.
- We learn from the complaint - where appropriate a review will be carried out and any recommended actions implemented to reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

Our Commitment to You

- We will ensure that complaints are listened to, investigated thoroughly and carefully considered
- We will treat complaints seriously.
- We will always treat you with courtesy and fairness in our dealings with you.
- We will treat your complaint with sensitivity, discretion and understanding.

Supporters are at the heart of everything we achieve. We want your experience of the Royal Berks Charity to be a rewarding experience. You can nonetheless make a complaint by:

Telephone: 0118 322 8860

Post: Royal Berks Charity, London Road, Reading RG1 5AN

E-mail: laura.mason@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

In person: Royal Berks Charity, London Road, Reading RG1 5AN

To ensure that your complaint can be dealt with quickly and efficiently you should provide the following information:

- Full name
- Postal address
- Email address
- Telephone number
- Full details of the complaint including relevant dates
- Your relationship with us, e.g. as a volunteer, donor, fundraiser, supporter
- Any evidence available to support your complaint, e.g. letters, emails, photos, names of witnesses, or other paperwork.

Our Process

Stage 1:

New complaints will be formally recorded and acknowledged within two working days. A full response will be provided within ten working days, once we have been able to investigate the details of your complaint. We may get in touch with you during this time to clarify any points with you. If this is the case, your full and prompt response will enable us to resolve your complaint as soon as possible.

Where your concerns require us to undertake further investigations and we are not able to provide a full resolution as part of our initial response we will provide you with an expected timescale for our response as part of your acknowledgement and keep you up-to-date at regular intervals throughout our investigations. Where this is the case, we will also tell you who is managing your complaint so you have a point of contact should you need to get in touch with us.

Stage 2:

If you are dissatisfied with the reply you receive at Stage 1 and you let us know within 15 working days of the date of our reply, your complaint will be passed to the Charity Director, to review it and how it was handled. We will confirm to you that your complaint has been escalated to Stage 2 and give you a date by which you will hear from us again.

The Charity Director will reply to you within 10 working days with his/her final decision and the reasons for it. If the Charity Director is not able to do this, they will let you know the date by which they expect to reply.

Stage 3:

If you remain dissatisfied with the reply at Stage 2 and you let us know within 10 working days of the date of the Charity Director's reply, your complaint will be referred to Chair of the Trustee Board to review it and provide a final reply.

They will aim to reply to you in full within 10 working days but if they are not able to do this, they will let you know the date by which they expect to reply. Following this, if you remain dissatisfied you can get in touch with either the Fundraising Regulator, if your complaint is about fundraising, or the Charity Commission, for other areas of our work. Their contact details are:

<p>Fundraising Regulator 2nd Floor CAN Mezzanine Building 49-51 East Road London N1 6AH</p> <p>Tel: 0300 999 3407 www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk E-mail: enquiries@fundraisingregulator.org.uk</p>	<p>The Charity Commission PO Box 1227 Liverpool L69 3UG</p> <p>Tel: 0845 3000 218 www.charity-commission.gov.uk</p>
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