

Handling complaints: policy and procedure

Policy statement

Harrogate District Foodbank is committed to working in an open and accountable way that secures the trust and respect of stakeholders, and as such recognises the role of an effective complaints policy in fostering transparency, fairness, and a culture of continuous improvement.

Philosophy

Harrogate District Foodbank undertakes to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as straightforward as possible.
- Complaints are dealt with promptly, courteously, and discreetly – confidentially when appropriate.
- We will respond decisively with an explanation, an apology where we have been at fault, or information on the outcome.
- We will learn from complaints and use them to make improvements in the way we work.

We hope that the majority of complaints can be dealt with informally, but in cases in which the formal procedure is more appropriate, we request that they are submitted in the following format:

- In writing, addressed FAO the Complaints Officer at Harrogate District Foodbank, Life Destiny Church, 93B High Street, Starbeck, HG2 7LH, or by email to info@Harrogatedistrict.foodbank.org.uk with 'Complaint' in the subject line.
- It should include a full explanation of the problem, how it occurred, and the effect on you.
- Describe what you think we should do to put things right.

We will deal with your complaint as follows:

1. We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days of receipt and provide you with the name of the person responsible for investigating the matter on your behalf.
2. The person responsible for the investigation will write to you with their findings and proposed resolution within twenty eight days from receipt of the complaint*.

3. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation you may appeal: letters must be received within twenty one working days of the date on the correspondence notifying you of the outcome of the first investigation.
4. The complaint will be reinvestigated and you will be informed of the outcome within 10 working days*.

** unless the complaint is particularly complex or time-consuming, in which case you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and notified of the expected date of completion.*

Other information

Complaints about **staff behaviour or attitude** will be handled by the line manager of the staff member or volunteer in question, and in accordance with the disciplinary procedure if appropriate. You will not be given details of the action we have taken as such information is confidential.

If you wish to make a complaint **anonymously** or do not provide contact details, then we will treat it as a comment and will be unable to advise you of the outcome of the investigation.

If your complaint contains abusive or offensive language, then we reserve the right to not respond. We reserve the right to report any such communication to the Police.

Please be aware that during the investigation of any complaint, consideration will be given as to whether Harrogate District Foodbank has a duty to report the matter to a relevant regulator, such as the Fundraising Regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office, the Charity Commission for England and Wales. Where appropriate, complaints will be escalated to one of these bodies.

Data Privacy Statement

We collate and analyse data about complaints so that we can improve the services we provide. We will collect personal information including your name and contact details, including postal address, telephone number, email address and social media contact information, in order to be able to communicate with you about your complaint. We will also collect sufficient information about the situation that you are contacting us about to be able to understand what has happened. We may need to request further information depending on the nature of your complaint. We have a legitimate interest in holding this information in order to be able to monitor and improve our services.

Information gathered is accessed by Trussell employees and may be shared with advice agencies or professional services firms only if appropriate, for example if your complaint relates to safeguarding and we seek guidance as to next steps. Where a complaint involves a food bank in our network, we may need to share this information with that food bank in order to understand what has happened and determine a resolution.

We keep this information for 2 years after your complaint has been closed, unless we have a requirement to keep it longer, in which case we will inform you of this. After this time the data will be aggregated and anonymised.

For completeness, the following policy and procedure from Trussell is included here.

Handling complaints made to Trussell against a Foodbank

Policy statement

Trussell is committed to working in an open and accountable way that secures the trust and respect of stakeholders, and as such recognises the role of an effective complaints policy in fostering transparency, fairness, and a culture of continuous improvement.

Food banks in the Trussell network are independent charities, not part of Trussell itself. Complaints against food banks should therefore be dealt with at a local level wherever possible. Please note that Trussell will need to share your details, and the details of the complaint with the food bank, unless you state in writing that you remain anonymous.

Philosophy

Trussell undertakes to ensure that:

- Complaints about food banks received by Trussell in writing are dealt with promptly, courteously, fairly and discreetly.
- Food banks are informed as fully as possible about the nature and detail of the complaint, subject to the degree of confidentiality requested by the complainant.
- Reasonable efforts are made to determine the facts affecting the complaint from both the complainant and the food bank.
- We will respond decisively to the complainant with an explanation of our actions, an apology where this is appropriate, or information on the outcome of our contact with the food bank within 28 days of receipt of the complaint.
- We will help food banks, the network and ourselves to learn from complaints and use them to make improvements in the ways we work.

We will deal with the complaint as follows:

1. We will acknowledge the complaint within five working days of receipt and provide the complainant with the name of the Trussell officer responsible for investigating the matter.
2. The person responsible for the investigation will contact the food bank within a following five working days to notify them of the complaint and enquire into the facts surrounding it.

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3. They will write to the complainant with their findings and proposed actions or resolution within 28 working days of the complaint being received*.
4. Where the food bank has acted fully in accordance with expected standards and procedures, the complainant will be advised of this and advised that Trussell has no reason to be further involved.
5. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation and they appeal within 21 days of receiving the first response, then the investigation may be reopened or it may be restated that the food bank has acted properly, as the investigating Trussell officer judges appropriate.

** unless the complaint is particularly complex or time-consuming, in which case they will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and notified of the expected date of completion.*

Trussell Data Privacy Statement

We collate and analyse data about complaints so that we can improve the services we provide. We will collect personal information including your name and contact details, including postal address, telephone number, email address and social media contact information, in order to be able to communicate with you about your complaint. We will also collect sufficient information about the situation that you are contacting us about to be able to understand what has happened. We may need to request further information depending on the nature of your complaint. We have a legitimate interest in holding this information in order to be able to monitor and improve our services.

Information gathered is accessed by Trussell employees and may be shared with advice agencies or professional services firms only if appropriate, for example if your complaint relates to safeguarding and we seek guidance as to next steps. Where a complaint involves a food bank in our network, we may need to share this information with that food bank in order to understand what has happened and determine a resolution.

We keep this information for 2 years after your complaint has been closed, unless we have a requirement to keep it longer, in which case we will inform you of this. After this time the data will be aggregated and anonymised.

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