

## Complaints policy & procedure

This policy is to help address concerns and complaints raised by those connected with Walton Charity, including residents, beneficiaries, and volunteers. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Walton Charity. The word 'complaint' does not need to be used for it to be treated as such.

We do not consider an initial service request to put something right as a complaint. For example, reporting a repair or anti-social behaviour, or making a complaint against another resident would be a service request. If we fail to respond or act against the initial service request, and cannot provide a satisfactory explanation or resolution, this could be considered a complaint.

We aim to ensure that you are fully satisfied with the Charity's services, but occasionally things go wrong, and you may wish to make a complaint. Initially we will endeavour to resolve things informally and will offer to meet with you to have a discussion. If it is not possible to resolve matters informally, we will go through a formal complaints procedure.

### Policy statement

Walton Charity 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. The Charity takes complaints very seriously and will act speedily to resolve them to the best of our ability. The Charity encourages anyone who believes they have not been treated properly in accordance with our service standards to submit a complaint.

The Charity undertakes to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as straightforward as possible, and we will accept complaints made by a third party or representative.
- 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 will comply with the Equality Act 2010, and may adapt this policy and procedure to accommodate an individual's needs.

The Charity's complaints procedure has two internal stages. If service users are covered by a managing agent or another organisation, such as Walton Allotment Association, they should use their complaints process first.

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For fundraising complaints, Walton Charity complies with the Code of Fundraising Practice and will deal with any complaints made concerning the Charity’s fundraising practices, using the same procedures as outlined below, or you have the option of taking your complaint to the Fundraising Regulator.

**Complaints procedure**

Complaints can be made in many different forms, for example by letter or email, by comments on a feedback form, in person to a member of staff or volunteer, by phone, via Walton Charity’s website “contact us” form, or via social media.

Walton Charity complaint handlers:

- will act sensitively and fairly
- are trained to handle complaints and deal with distressed and upset complainants
- have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints
- have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.

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.

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

However the complaint reaches Walton Charity, the following procedure should be followed.

**Stage 1**

Upon receiving a complaint, the Charity will record details of the complaint and assign the complaint to the appropriate manager. We will log and acknowledge the complaint within five days of receipt, unless we can provide a full response within this timescale. We hope most matters can be dealt with within this timescale, but where a more detailed response is needed, we will respond in full within 10 working days of the complaint being made. If more time is required to respond to the complaint, we will discuss and agree this with the complainant.

Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this, and set out the actions we intend to put things right. Any remedy offered will reflect the extent of any service failures and the impact caused to the resident or beneficiary as a result. We will not promise anything that cannot be delivered or would cause unfairness to other residents or beneficiaries.

Once you have received the complaint response, if you are not satisfied with the response, you may proceed to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure. You should do so within 20 days

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of the date of the response. A Stage 2 complaint will be considered by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

## Stage 2

Put your complaint in writing, or email, addressed to Rob Mills, Chief Executive at: Walton Charity, Charities House, 1 & 2 The Quintet, Churchfield Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 2TZ, or email [admin@waltoncharity.org.uk](mailto:admin@waltoncharity.org.uk). The Stage 2 complaint will be considered by an independent member of the Senior Leadership Team, who has not been involved in the complaint previously.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your complaint within five days. We will respond to Stage 2 complaints within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. If more time is required, we will discuss and agree this with you, and provide an explanation containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

Walton Charity will confirm the following in writing at the completion of Stage 2 in clear, plain language:

- the complaint stage
- the complaint definition
- the decision on the complaint
- the reasons for any decisions made
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right
- details of any outstanding actions
- if a resident of the Charity, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

This is the final stage of the Charity's complaints procedure.

Complaint handlers will not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints process.

If you are a resident of the Charity and we decline to escalate a complaint or cannot agree an extension of time to deal with a complaint if required, we will provide the Housing Ombudsman's details so you can challenge the decision.

For housing matters, the Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted at:

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 1484

Unit D

Preston. PR2 0ET

Tel. 0300 111 3000

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

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For fundraising matters, the Fundraising Regulator can be contacted at:

Fundraising Regulator  
 Eagle House  
 167 City Road  
 London  
 EC1V 1AW  
 Tel: 0300 999 3407  
 Email: [complaints@fundraisingregulator.org.uk](mailto:complaints@fundraisingregulator.org.uk)

If your complaint contains abusive or offensive language or is vexatious in nature, then we reserve the right not to respond. All complaints will be considered by Walton Charity, unless the complaint has previously been considered under the complaints policy. Unacceptable behaviour from a resident in making a complaint may be considered a breach of the rules and regulations of their occupancy. We reserve the right to report any such behaviour or communication to the Police.

**Review, reporting and monitoring**

This complaints policy and procedure will be reviewed regularly, at least annually.

The Board of Trustees will receive regular updates about complaints, including quarterly reporting on the number of cases, and an annual complaints report. This will include the number and outcome of complaints, as well wider learning and improvement from complaints. The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code will also be provided for scrutiny and challenge. The Board will appoint a trustee to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture.

Information and learning from complaints will also be provided regularly to residents.

If you have any comments or queries regarding this document, please contact:

Rob Mills, Chief Executive  
 Walton Charity  
 Charities House  
 1 & 2 The Quintet  
 Walton-on-Thames  
 Surrey. KT12 2TZ  
 Tel: 01932 220242  
 Email: [admin@waltoncharity.org.uk](mailto:admin@waltoncharity.org.uk)

**Data privacy**

To find out how the Charity uses and handles your data, please visit

[www.waltoncharity.org.uk/privacy-policy](http://www.waltoncharity.org.uk/privacy-policy)

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