



Conversation Over Borders

Complaints Policy & Procedure

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| Created | 02/02/2023 | Colette Batten-Turner |
| Last Reviewed | 11/11/2025 | Colette Batten-Turner |
| Due for Review | 11/11/2026 | |

Contents

1. Complaints Policy Statement
2. Scope of this policy
3. Definition of a complaint
4. Concern or Complaint
5. Complaints Procedure
6. Anonymous complaints
7. Data Protection
8. Monitoring

1. Complaints Policy Statement

Conversation Over Borders:

- is committed to providing a good standard of quality services to service users, other agencies and organisations
- will take seriously any concern or complaint and will look into it promptly, for resolution as quickly as possible
- recognises that all service users, volunteers, staff and organisations
 - have the right to raise concerns or complaints about our services
 - should have access to clear information on how to voice complaints and concerns
- concerns and complaints procedure is open to everyone who receives or requests a service from Conversation Over Borders and people acting on their behalf



- will produce digital and physical resources outlining this policy and procedure which should be displayed and available to anyone who asks for it.
- will deal with complaints in line with Conversation Over Borders' Confidentiality policy
- will keep a register of all complaints, which will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Advisors
- A complaints procedure will be part of the process of monitoring the quality, effectiveness and non-discriminatory nature of its services (see Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Equal Opportunities Statement).
- All staff, volunteers and Board members are required to read, understand and comply with this policy and its procedures.

This **Complaints Policy and Procedure** is designed to be read alongside the Conversation Over Borders **Whistleblowing Policy**.

2. Scope of this policy

Conversation Over Borders strives for high standards in service delivery and welcomes feedback from individuals, users of our services, stakeholders, funding bodies and anyone who works with us, on all aspects of our services. Such feedback helps us to evaluate and improve our work and set our strategic direction.

The objectives of this complaints policy and procedures are to:

- Ensure everyone knows how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be handled
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear time frames
- Provide individuals with a fair and effective way to complain about our work
- Ensure that complaints are monitored to improve our services

Conversation Over Borders will ensure that we:

- Listen carefully to complaints and treat complaints as confidential, where possible
- Record, store and manage all complaints accurately and in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the Organisation's Data Protection Policy
- Investigate the complaint fully, objectively and within the stated time frame
- Notify the complainant of the results of the investigation and any right of appeal
- Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented in order to ensure that there is no re-occurrence
- Report on an annual basis, the number of complaints received, the outcomes and any actions taken.



3. Definition of a complaint

a) A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by an individual, whether justified or not.

b) An individual may make a complaint if they feel Conversation Over Borders has:

- Failed to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service or made a mistake in the way the service was provided
- Failed to act in a proper way
- Provided an unfair service

4. Concern or Complaint

a) Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of their developing into formal complaints.

b) If you have any concerns about our work please tell a staff member or their manager as soon as possible, so they can quickly understand your concerns and try to put things right.

c) If you are not happy with the response to your concern and/or you want to make a formal complaint please follow the procedure below.

5. Complaints Procedure

Conversation Over Borders aims to settle the majority of complaints quickly and satisfactorily by the member of staff who provides the service. The complaint may be resolved quickly by way of an apology or by an acceptable explanation to the individual.

There are three stages to the complaint's procedure:

- Stage One – the complaint
- Stage Two – investigation
- Stage Three – appeal

Stage One - Complaint



- a) The complaint can be written, or if the individual prefers they can tell someone at Conversation Over Borders, or someone else, who will write it down for them. We may ask the complainant to confirm details are correct and to sign it.
- b) Individuals wishing to make a complaint should contact the person who provided the service, or their line manager. Alternatively, they can contact us by writing to: Conversation Over Borders, Community Base, 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG.
- c) The complaint should include the complainants name and address, the nature and date of the complaint and how they want to see it resolved. The complaints form can be requested and can be sent to the complainant or collected by the complainant.
- d) On receipt, each complaint will be allocated a reference number and logged on the complaints register. Complainants must receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days of receipt of a signed complaint.

Stage Two - Investigation

- a) All complaints at this stage should be dealt with by a manager. If they need to meet with the complainant, they will do so within seven working days of receiving the written complaint.
- b) Complaints will be fully investigated, and a written response provided to the complainant within 20 working days by the investigator.
- c) The complainant will receive written confirmation of the outcome of any investigation, recommendations/remedies made, such as reviewing of policies, staff development and training or appropriate improvement to our services.
- d) Where the complaint is upheld an apology should be offered.
- e) Occasionally investigations may take longer, particularly if the complaint is complex. Should this be the case a holding letter will be sent after ten working days and a final date given for a conclusion to be reached.
- f) If an individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome from Stage Two they can appeal within fourteen working days of the date of the outcome and progress to Stage Three.
- g) The complaints register will be updated, and any pending complaints flagged so they are followed up.

Stage Three - Appeal



a) If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainants satisfaction at stage two, or if the manager feels that the complaint is of a very serious nature, or concerns a service leader then it will be referred to the Chief Executive Officer.

b) If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer then the matter will be discussed with two members of the Board.

c) The Chief Executive and/or Board members will acknowledge receipt within three working days. They will review the Stage Two investigation and recommend one of the following actions within ten working days (from the date the complainant stated they wanted to take the complaint to stage 3):

- Uphold the action taken at Stage Two
- Make changes to the Stage Two recommendation/actions

d) The complainant should be informed in writing of the outcome of stage three, the decision reached about this complaint will then be final but other options available to the complainant (as listed below) should be detailed in the letter.

e) If after Conversation Over Borders has been through the three stages and the complainant is still not satisfied with the result, they should be advised that there is no further right of appeal with Conversation Over Borders but they could approach any of the following agencies for advice:

- A solicitor
- Citizens Advice Bureau

This should be done within one month of receiving the outcome from the appeal.

6. Anonymous complaints

Complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if further information is required to ensure a full and fair investigation.

7. Data protection

To process a complaint Conversation Over Borders will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides, and which other people give in response to the complaint. We will hold this data securely and only use it to address the complaint.

The identity of the person making the complaint will only be known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public. However, it



may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applied or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

b) Conversation Over Borders will normally destroy complaints files in a secure manner six years after the complaint has been closed.

8. Monitoring

Complaints are an important tool which, alongside data provided by exit surveys, stakeholder surveys, user feedback and focus groups, will allow us to learn about the services we provide. They provide a useful source of information about how individuals see our services and how we are serving them. To ensure we can learn from complaints, where appropriate the following data will be collected:

- Name and address
- Name of person dealing with the complaint
- Date of complaint and response
- Nature of complaint
- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the complaint Lessons learnt

Complaints information will be considered on a regular basis by the Management Team and reported quarterly to the Conversation Over Borders Board. Wherever possible the data will be used to improve and develop the service.