



# Conversation Over Borders

## Complaints Policy & Procedure

<b>Last Reviewed</b>	11/11/2025	Colette Batten-Turner
<b>Due for Review</b>	11/11/2026	

### 1. Policy Statement

Conversation Over Borders (COB) is committed to providing high-quality services and maintaining a fair, respectful and inclusive working environment.

We welcome feedback, concerns and complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve. We are committed to:

- Handling complaints and grievances fairly, consistently and sensitively
- Ensuring concerns are addressed promptly and transparently
- Providing a clear and accessible process for raising issues
- Protecting individuals from detriment when raising concerns in good faith

### 2. Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to:

- Service users
- Volunteers
- Staff (employees and workers)
- Partner organisations and stakeholders

Complaints relating to an individual's employment (e.g. treatment at work, dismissal, discrimination, working conditions) will be treated as formal grievances and handled under this procedure.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Disciplinary Policy



- Whistleblowing Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection Policy

### **3. Definitions**

#### **Complaint**

Any expression of dissatisfaction about COB's services, actions, or decisions.

#### **Grievance**

A concern, problem or complaint raised by an employee relating to their employment, including:

- Working conditions
- Treatment by colleagues or management
- Organisational decisions affecting their role
- Concerns relating to discrimination, health, or wellbeing

### **4. Guiding Principles**

COB will ensure that all complaints and grievances are:

- Taken seriously and handled promptly
- Investigated fairly and objectively
- Managed confidentially where possible
- Free from retaliation or disadvantage to the individual raising the concern

Where appropriate, COB may seek external or independent advice to ensure fairness.

### **5. Informal Resolution**

We encourage concerns to be raised informally in the first instance where appropriate.

- Service users: speak to a staff member or programme lead
- Staff: speak to their line manager or another appropriate manager

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, it can be escalated to a formal complaint or



grievance.

## **6. Formal Procedure**

There are three stages:

### **Stage One: Formal Complaint / Grievance**

- Complaints or grievances can be submitted in writing or verbally (with support if needed)
- They should include:
  - Nature of the concern
  - Relevant dates and details
  - Desired outcome (if known)
- Complaints should be sent to:
  - A staff member or line manager
  - Or via: [info@conversationoverborders.org](mailto:info@conversationoverborders.org)
- Acknowledgement will be provided within 5 working days

### **Stage Two - Investigation**

- A manager or appropriate investigator will be appointed
- Where appropriate, this may include:
  - A senior manager
  - A Board member
  - An independent external investigator or HR advisor

Any investigator will not have had prior involvement in the matter where possible.

- A full investigation will be conducted
- A written outcome will be provided within 20 working days

Where cases are complex, timescales may be extended and the individual will be informed of revised timelines.

The outcome may include:

- Findings
- Actions or recommendations
- Any appropriate remedies



### **Stage Three - Appeal**

If the individual is dissatisfied:

- An appeal must be submitted within 14 working days
- The appeal will be reviewed by:
  - The Chief Executive Officer, or
  - The Board of Directors

**If the complaint involves the CEO:**

- The appeal will be handled by Board members with no prior involvement wherever possible, or
- An independent external party where appropriate
- A final decision will be provided within 20 working days

This decision is final within COB's internal process.

### **7. External Escalation**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may seek external advice or resolution through:

- ACAS
- A trade union
- Citizens Advice
- A solicitor

### **8. Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints will be recorded and considered, but investigation may be limited if insufficient information is provided.

### **9. Data Protection and Confidentiality**

COB will:

- Handle all personal data in line with UK GDPR



- Keep information secure and only share it where necessary

Confidentiality will be maintained where possible, but may be limited where:

- Legal obligations apply
- Safeguarding concerns arise
- A fair investigation requires disclosure

Complaint records will normally be retained for six years.

## **10. Monitoring and Learning**

COB will:

- Maintain a complaints register
- Review complaints regularly

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.

## **11. Non-Retaliation**

COB is committed to ensuring that individuals who raise complaints or grievances in good faith:

- Are treated fairly
- Are not subject to retaliation, detriment or disadvantage

Any concerns about retaliation should be raised immediately and will be treated seriously.

Key Contacts

- **Chief Executive Officer**  
Colette Batten-Turner  
info@conversationoverborders.org
- **Board of Directors**  
board@conversationoverborders.org