

Complaints Policy

This policy advises employees how Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity (GOSH Charity) and Sparks handles, investigates and records complaints received by donors, supporters or members of the public.

Owner Head of Governance, Legal and Compliance

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Non-contractual policy



**GREAT
ORMOND
STREET
HOSPITAL
CHARITY**

Policy statement

Introduction

Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity (GOSH Charity), its trading subsidiary Great Ormond Street Hospital International Promotions Limited and Sparks Charity (collectively referred to as the GOSH Charity Family) aim to treat all donors, supporters and members of the public with the highest level of care and respect.

The GOSH Charity Family comprises Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity; Great Ormond Street International Promotions Limited; and Sparks Charity. For the purposes of this policy, a reference to GOSH Charity Family includes all employed staff, accredited volunteers, and/or contracted staff (such as telemarketing, face-to-face agency staff), who represent the Charity to supporters and the public. It also includes third party 'in aid of' fundraisers, who we are not liable for and do not represent us.

We seek to constantly improve our service to donors, supporters and members of the public and ensure our complaints' policy adheres to best practice. We regard a complaint as an opportunity for us to reflect on our processes and practices and see if we can strengthen and improve them. However, on occasion we recognise that we may not meet our high standards. When a complaint is received it will be logged and investigated promptly in line with our Supporter Commitment.

To view our Supporter Commitment in full, please click [here](#).

When dealing with complaints we aim to:

- be open and transparent through well-publicised, accessible information and processes, understood by all those involved in a complaint;
- ensure our investigations and responses are evidence based, providing a consistent approach to the management and investigation of complaints;
- be logical and rational in our approach;
- be sympathetic in our responses to complaints responding within appropriate time frames;
- provide a level of detail appropriate to the seriousness of the complaint;
- identify the causes of complaints and take action to prevent recurrences; and
- use 'lessons learnt' as a driver for change and improvement.

GOSH Charity and Sparks Charity are regulated by the Fundraising Regulator (FR), the independent regulator of charity fundraising. The FR sets and promotes the standards for all fundraising activity, known as the 'Code of Fundraising Practice'.

For more information on the Fundraising Regulator please visit its website, www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk.

Scope

This policy applies to all Trustees, staff, volunteers, contractors, suppliers and other people working on behalf of the charity.

Key roles and responsibilities

Everyone who works for, or with, or on behalf of the charity has some responsibility for ensuring complaints and enquiries are appropriately managed. The roles below have key areas of responsibility:

- The Trustees are ultimately responsible for ensuring the charity meets its regulatory obligations;
- The Chair of Governance Reputation and Risk Committee (Committee of the Board of Trustees) is the lead for complaints management on behalf of the Trustees;
- The Chief Executive is the senior accountable officer and is required to provide assurance to the Trustees that complaints management is effectively managed;
- The Senior Leadership Team has responsibility for actively championing complaints handling and management;
- The Supporter Care Manager has operational responsibility for managing complaints received in line with this policy and associated procedures.

All staff, whether permanent, temporary, seconded, honorary, voluntary or contracted must ensure they are familiar with this policy and that they comply with it and its associated procedures on a day-to-day basis.

Definitions

Complaint

A complaint is where either an individual or organisation, considers that the GOSH Charity Family has fallen short of their reasonable expectations and communicates their dissatisfaction by telephone, mail, email, through social media, or in person.

Appendix A provides a non-exhaustive list of examples that would be considered a complaint.

Enquiry

An enquiry is where an individual or organisation asks a question to gather further information about any of the activities or events delivered by the GOSH Charity Family.

Appendix B provides a non-exhaustive list of examples that would be considered an enquiry.

Where it is unclear whether a communication is an enquiry or a complaint, it is generally best to err on the side of caution and treat it as a complaint.

Who can raise a complaint?

A complaint can be made by anyone. This may be someone directly or indirectly affected by the matter causing dissatisfaction or worry, or by an individual or organisation acting on behalf of someone else e.g. in the case of a person who is unable (for whatever reason) or lacks capacity to raise the complaint themselves.

Some individuals may not wish to provide their contact details or identify themselves when raising a complaint and the charity will accept and manage in the same way all complaints, even if they are received anonymously. If a complaint is submitted anonymously, we are unlikely to respond with any updates and may have impact on resolution if we are unable to contact if we need to clarify the issue

A complaint could be received via telephone, email, post, social media or in person. All staff must be vigilant towards identifying a complaint and upon receipt ensuring it is handled appropriately in line with the procedures for complaint handling.

Timescales - commitment to supporters

We endeavour to respond fully to all complaints and enquiries as soon as possible and within a maximum of 20 working days or one full calendar month.

Escalation

The GOSH Charity Family endeavours to ensure all complaints are handled effectively and to the satisfaction of everyone. However, if an individual remains dissatisfied with the response received, they can request the GOSH Charity Family reconsiders their response. If such a request is made, the GOSH Charity Family will escalate the review of the handling of the case to the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team.

If, following, internal review, an individual or organisation, continues to be dissatisfied with the response or the way in which their complaint has been managed, the complainant may raise their concerns with the relevant external Regulator.

- For complaints about any of our fundraising activities (excluding raffles), including gaming, the individual would be directed to the Fundraising Regulator;
- For complaints relating to how the charity has conducted its raffle and lottery activity the individual would be directed to our appointed mediation firm, Pro Mediate;
- For complaints relating to data protection, the individual would be directed to the Information Commissioner's Office; and
- For complaints relating to any other aspect of the charity's work, the individual would be directed to the Charity Commission.

Recording of complaints

GOSH Charity Family maintains accurate records of all complaints and enquiries received. Such records are managed in line with the [GOSH Charity Family's Privacy Policy](#) and [Records Retention Policy](#).

Vexatious complaints and persistent complainants

All complaints and enquiries will be dealt with in accordance with this policy. However, unreasonable or abusive complaint behaviour does happen from time to time and vexatious and repetitive complaints are an increasing problem. Difficulties in handling such situations can place strain on time and resources and can be stressful for staff dealing with these complex and challenging issues.

GOSH Charity Family defines vexatious complaints as those where it can be demonstrated that it is without basis and it would tend to, or is being made with an intention to, cause worry, upset, annoyance or embarrassment. Unreasonably persistent complainants are defined as those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the GOSH Charity Family, hinder the charity's consideration of their or other people's complaints.

The GOSH Charity Family aims to respond to all complaints however, on rare occasions, such as where a complaint is identified as vexatious in nature. In some cases, we may determine to respond to the complainant to advise we will not be taking the complaint any further, or we may choose not to respond. Such decision not to respond will be assessed on a case-by-case basis with due regard to the individual circumstances.

Guidance can be sought from the Supporter Care manager, and/or Senior Leadership team to help identify a vexatious complaint.

See Appendix C for guidelines.

Complaints related to GOSH

Sometimes GOSH Charity receives complaints that are meant for the hospital. These complaints will be logged on Salesforce automatically.

Where the complaint is fully related to hospital activity, e.g. patient care, it will be passed to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) at the hospital, who will ensure a full response is provided. A response to the complainant will be provided confirming the action we have taken.

If the complaint includes an element related to the charity, e.g. cancellation of a donation, then it should be managed in line with the charity complaints process.

Monitoring, training and evaluation

Everyone involved with the GOSH Charity Family must observe this policy.

Training and awareness of complaints handling is available to all staff, provided by the Fundraising Training and Quality Control Specialist and content is refreshed and updated on a recurrent basis.

The Head of Governance, Legal and Compliance has overall responsibility for this policy. They, alongside the Fundraising Training and Quality Control Specialist, will monitor it regularly to make sure it is being adhered to and undertake regular review of all complaints in conjunction with the Supporter Care Manager.

The Head of Governance, Legal and Compliance will ensure that the Senior Leadership Team and Trustees receive regular reports and trend analysis on complaints and presents a report to the Governance Reputation and Risk Committee at each meeting. Any complaints related to the hospital received by GOSH Charity will form part of the regular reports, however will be attributed to the hospital and not form part of our complaint numbers.

See also: **The Charity's Supporter Commitment**
 Complaints Process and Procedure Document
 Complaint Escalation Procedure
 Privacy Policy
 Records Retention Procedure

Appendix A

Example complaints (non-exhaustive)

1. Discourteous and / or insensitive behaviour to individuals or organisations
2. Not thanking a supporter when we should
3. Promising to provide information and / or respond by an agreed date and then not following through, without keeping the individual informed of progress
4. Any incorrect income processing involving a supporter (e.g. incorrect direct debit or credit card donations)
5. Disagreement with fundraising activity (e.g. face-to-face)
6. Mailed or telephoned a deceased person
7. Mailed, telephoned or approached a vulnerable person through pressuring to donate
8. Contacted (via any communication method including telephone and email) a supporter without appropriate consent having been given
9. Supporter cannot afford to make a donation
10. Charity spend on a specific type of fundraising activity
11. Refusal of the charity to accept donations for events that are excluded by our Moral and Ethical Policy
12. Breakdown with third-party suppliers that then causes a complaint
13. Supporter's concern/enquiry on ethical and / or legal grounds about a type of fundraising activity
14. A researcher dissatisfied with the charity's procedures for handling applications for research funding
15. Concern/enquiring regarding privacy or information security affecting a donor or supporter

Appendix B

Example Enquiries (non-exhaustive)

1. When can I expect to receive my thank-you letter/certificate/vest?
2. Do you have door-to-door fundraisers in my area?
3. Can I receive a collection bucket?
4. How do I access your online donation form?
5. Why do you test on animals?

Appendix C

Example vexatious/persistent complaints (non-exhaustive)

1. When a complaint is about something that GOSH Charity Family has no direct connection to. e.g. a complaint about the Government and NHS. We may choose to reply to clear our name, but we are not obliged to.
2. When someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that we have already responded to. They will be given escalation points, but we may choose not to reply again.
3. When a complainant is being obviously abusive, prejudiced or offensive in their manner.
4. When a complainant is harassing a staff member.