

Speak Life External Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how Speak Life handles external complaints. We value feedback and take all concerns seriously, using them to improve our practices, services, and content. This policy ensures that complaints are addressed promptly, fairly, and transparently.

This complaints policy is made publicly available through the Speak Life website.¹

2. Scope

This policy applies to external individuals or organisations (e.g. viewers, readers, contributors, partners, or members of the public) who wish to raise a complaint about:

- Our published media content (e.g. accuracy, bias, ethics)
- Our services, communications, or public engagement including fundraising
- The conduct of our staff, volunteers, or representatives
- Any actions perceived as inconsistent with our values or mission

Note: Internal (staff or volunteer) complaints are covered under our internal grievance policy.

3. Definition of a Complaint

A **complaint** is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of our work, content, behaviour, or impact.

We do **not** consider the following as complaints under this policy:

- Requests for information.
- General feedback or opinions. Examples include comments made on YouTube in response to Speak Life content.
- Matters already subject to legal action.
- Complaints intended to harass, abuse, or defame.

4. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints should be submitted in writing and include as much detail as possible.

You can submit a complaint via:

- **Email:** complaints@speaklife.org.uk

¹ The Fundraising Regulator requires that a complaints policy is made publicly available.

- **Post:** Operations Team (Complaints), Speak Life, 13, Lismore Road, Eastbourne BN21 3AY

Please provide:

- Your name and contact details
- A clear description of your complaint
- Relevant dates, people involved, or examples
- What outcome you are seeking, if applicable

We aim to acknowledge receipt of a complaint within **5 working days**.

5. Handling Complaints

We follow a **three-stage** process:

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, we will try to resolve complaints informally through direct communication. This may involve clarification, explanation, or a simple remedy.

Response Time: Within **15 working days** of acknowledgement.

Stage 2: Formal Investigation

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally or is serious in nature, it will be escalated to a Director and the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be informed. (The Director and Chair will also consider whether action is required by our Serious Incident Reporting policy.) A thorough review will be conducted. If the complaint concerns the actions of a Director then a Trustee will oversee the review.

Response Time: Within **20 working days** of escalation. If more time is needed, we will inform you with an estimated timeline.

Stage 3: Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may request an internal appeal. The complaint will be reviewed by a Director or Trustee not involved in the original investigation.

Final Decision: Issued within **20 working days** of appeal request.

6. Confidentiality

All complaints are handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection laws. Information will only be shared with those necessary to investigate and resolve the complaint.

7. Learning and Improvement

All complaints are logged and reviewed to identify trends and areas for improvement. Serious complaints may lead to changes in policy, training, or practice.

8. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

We reserve the right to limit or stop correspondence with complainants who behave unreasonably, including those who:

- Repeatedly raise the same issue with no new evidence
- Use abusive or threatening language
- Demand unrealistic outcomes

We will communicate any such decision clearly and fairly.

9. External Oversight

If you remain dissatisfied after completing our internal process, you may escalate your complaint to the **Charity Commission** – [www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity]

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Trustees and updated as needed to reflect changes in legislation, regulation, or organisational priorities.

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Main changes	Next review due
1.0	Board	18 Nov 2025	N/A: first draft	November 2028