



The FRSB Complaints Process – A Member’s Guide

This document is intended to help your organisation become fully compliant with the Fundraising Standards Board’s complaints process. It covers:

- 1. Member Requirements for Complaints – The Basics**
- 2. Your Complaints Process – What Must it Include?**
- 3. Overview of the FRSB Complaints Process**
- 4. How Does the FRSB Assess Complaints?**
- 5. What Can Happen if a Complaint is Upheld?**

In addition to the Terms & Conditions you signed up to when you became a member, this document outlines the **key requirements of FRSB membership**; it does not constitute **best practice guidance**. For tips regarding best practice, please consult the FRSB complaints handling manual www.frsb.org.uk/uploads/Advice_Regulation/FRSB_Complaints_Manual.pdf.

1. Member Requirements for Complaints – The Basics

- ✓ Nominate a main point of contact for all fundraising complaints and related enquiries (this does not need to be an external appointment). The FRSB will refer to them as your Complaints Co-ordinator and they will be the person we contact if we receive a complaint about you. Please consult the “Complaints Co-ordinator – An Overview” document for more detailed information about what the role entails visit <http://www.frsb.org.uk/english/advice-and-regulation/complaints/handling-a-fundraising-complaint/complaints-co-ordinato/>.
- ✓ Reproduce the Fundraising Promise on your website. It is important to make supporters aware of the fact that you have made a commitment to be accountable, fair and reasonable, respectful, clear and honest and open by becoming an FRSB member.
- ✓ Put a complaints procedure in place which is available both in writing and/or on your website if you have one. It must be easily accessible to members of the public. Please visit: www.frsb.org.uk/uploads/Advice_Regulation/FRSB_Complaints_Manual.pdf to access our Complaint Handling Manual which contains template complaints procedures if you need help with drafting one.
- ✓ Send us a copy of your complaints procedure as soon as you become a member. If you make any changes to it during the course of your membership, please send us the revised version.



- ✓ Keep a record of **all** fundraising complaints, regardless of how they came into you.
- ✓ Complete the FRSB's Annual Complaints Return every year. Completing a complaints return not only helps to raise fundraising standards across the sector, it helps you to assess the effectiveness of your fundraising activities throughout the year. We will keep the details of any complaints you report to us each year in your complaints return confidential. We will only publish general information and trend reports.
- ✓ If you use volunteers to fundraise for your charity, you must make sure they keep to the Fundraising Promise and any relevant Institute of Fundraising Codes of Practice. We understand that sometimes volunteers could fundraise for you without your knowledge and accept that it is not possible for you to make sure they keep to the codes on these occasions.
- ✓ You must cooperate with us if somebody wants us to review a complaint about you. You must keep to any sanction that we give you if we find you were in the wrong.

2. Your Complaints Process – What Must it Include?

Your complaints procedure needs to provide details of how people can make a complaint. It also needs to highlight the importance of keeping a ***full and up to date complaints record***. The record **must** include:

- ✓ The date that your organisation received the complaint.
- ✓ A copy of the complaint itself including all relevant emails, letters and details of any phone conversations.
- ✓ If you feel it is relevant, please record the details of the code of practice and/or section of our Fundraising Promise that's alleged to have been broken.
- ✓ Details of what was done to resolve the complaint.
- ✓ A copy of the letter or email you sent to the person complaining. The response must provide full details of the investigation and advice on what to do next if the complaint is still not satisfied.
- ✓ This record must be made available to us should we request it as part of our investigation.

The procedure itself needs to highlight that every complaint will receive an acknowledgement **within 14 days**. You also need to ensure it advises the complainant that they will receive a full response to their complaint **within 30 days**. Please note that these are maximum timeframes; you can of course respond to a complaint much sooner.



In addition to outlining how you will deal with complaints internally, your complaints procedure **must** include:

- ✓ A section that informs people that they can contact the FRSB if they feel your organisation has not resolved their complaint to their satisfaction.
- ✓ FRSB contact details.
- ✓ A brief overview of what Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the FRSB complaints procedure entails.

You must outline your complaints procedure to anyone wishing to make a complaint about your organisation and make them aware of the fact that you are a member of the FRSB wherever possible.

3. Overview of the FRSB Complaints Process

General Info

- ✓ We acknowledge every complaint we receive within 14 days.
- ✓ If we consider it to be appropriate, we may refer a complaint to other appropriate regulatory bodies such as the ASA, Direct Marketing Commission or the police.
- ✓ If the complaint isn't about fundraising, we won't deal with it; however, we will keep a note of the complaint for future reference and may refer it to a third party for their follow up.

In addition to the more general points outlined above, the FRSB operates a 3 stage complaints process. All of our members are required to follow this process.

Stage 1:

At this stage, you must try to resolve the complaint without FRSB intervention. We appreciate that the complaint may need to be escalated to different members of staff if that's what your internal complaints procedure dictates.

If the FRSB receives a complaint before your organisation has had the chance to investigate and respond, we'll advise the complainant to contact you first; alternatively, we may do this on the complainant's behalf if they request it.

Stage 2:

If the complainant has been through every step of your internal complaints procedure and is not happy with your investigation, either you or the complainant can refer the complaint to us within two months of your final response to them.



This constitutes Stage 2 of the process. We will investigate and respond to the complaint within 30 days of receiving it. During this period:

- ✓ We will ask you to send us any info from your log about what you've done with the complaint so far.
- ✓ We will ask the person complaining to send us any details they think are relevant so that we can investigate properly.
- ✓ We will try to resolve the complaint as best we can without having to take more serious action. This may include, for example, recommending changes to campaigns if we feel it is in the interests of complaint resolution or code compliance.
- ✓ If a resolution is reached, we will record the outcome of the complaint. We will then report on ALL of the Stage 2 complaints we have dealt with in our annual report.

Stage 3:

- ✓ If we can't resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of either the charity in question or the member of the public, we will refer it to our board within **30 days**.
- ✓ During the remaining **60 days**, the board will look at the case alongside all the relevant paperwork and look at what's been done so far.
- ✓ They will do whatever they think is necessary to resolve the complaint, which might include contacting everybody involved to get a better understanding of both points of view.
- ✓ They'll then produce a written document that outlines whether or not they're going to uphold the complaint.
- ✓ The board's decision is final and neither you nor the complainant can launch an appeal.
- ✓ Details of the board's decision will be made public. We will state whether or not the board upheld the complaint and we may give details of any action taken against you.
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4. How Does the FRSB Assess Complaints?

We're here to make sure that organisations across the sector are adhering to the Institute of Fundraising Codes of Practice and the Fundraising Promise. We assess complaints on that basis.

We will only be able to uphold a complaint if there has been a breach of a **"must"** or **"ought"** regulation contained in the Institute's Codes, or a clear breach of our **Fundraising Promise**. A **"Must"** regulation is one that is required by law and **"Ought"** is a mandatory regulation regarding the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Practice; both therefore need to be followed by all of our members. **"Should"** regulations outline what is recommended as fundraising best practice.



5. What Can Happen if the Complaint is Upheld?

If a complaint against you is upheld by the FRSB Board, we will either tell you that no further action is required or we could ask you to do one or more of the following:

- ✓ Apologise to the complainant.
- ✓ Improve your training systems or procedures as appropriate to minimise or eliminate the chances of a similar complaint happening again.

In more serious cases, or in the case of repeated complaints:

- ✓ You should stop the fundraising method or the conduct which was the subject of the complaint.
- ✓ You should withdraw, change and/or reprint any fundraising materials which were the subject of the complaint.
- ✓ In the most serious cases, or in cases where you haven't taken any notice when we have asked you to either stop using a method of fundraising or take urgent action to resolve a complaint, your membership will be withdrawn.