

Oxfam GB Complaints Policy

Approval Date:	January 2024
Effective From:	As above
Author:	Deputy General Counsel
Policy Owner:	Chief Financial Officer
LT Sponsor:	Chief Financial Officer
Approved By:	Council
Union consulted:	No
Date for Renewal:	January 2027 - Reviewed by Council every 3 years
Geographical Scope:	England, Wales and Scotland only.
Implementation owner:	Chief Financial Officer with support of Head of ED Risk and Compliance, Head of Supporter Relations, Head of Festivals and Events and Head of Retail Operations
Implementation plan:	Internal complaint procedure
Circulation:	Public

1) POLICY STATEMENT

Oxfam is committed to upholding its value of accountability and using feedback to achieve our goals and demonstrate our values. Oxfam therefore welcomes feedback on its actions or the actions of those directly involved in the delivery of Oxfam's work. Oxfam will take all complaints seriously, and will maintain a transparent, well-publicised, effective and timely process for making and handling a complaint and ensure that any complaints are handled constructively, impartially and effectively. Oxfam will therefore:

- 1) investigate complaints proportionately and appropriately;
- 2) make the complaints procedure accessible for all and to ensure that staff understand their responsibilities to help investigate and resolve complaints;
- 3) provide constructive feedback on all complaints and to learn from and to apologise where mistakes have been made;
- 4) provide a summary of complaints and lessons learned annually to the Board which will be publicly available.

2) SCOPE AND ELIGIBILITY

This policy applies to complaints made by external stakeholders who have been directly impacted or dissatisfied with the standards of services, actions or lack of action by Oxfam, its staff, volunteers or anybody directly involved in the delivery of our work.

This policy only applies to the delivery of Oxfam's work within England, Wales and Scotland.

The Complaints Policy **applies to:**

- 1) General complaints about Oxfam
- 2) Complaints about fundraising
- 3) Complaints about events and our Festivals operation (including from volunteers attending these)
- 4) Complaints about retail activities and shops

This policy **does not apply to:**

- 1) Complaints based on a disagreement with an Oxfam advocacy or campaigns position.
- 2) Complaints made by Oxfam's current staff/volunteers or former staff/volunteers including those relating to misconduct.
- 3) Complaints relating to other Oxfam affiliates or Oxfam International.
- 4) Complaints about international programmes.
- 5) Complaints about misconduct, which include, but are not limited to safeguarding, fraud/ corruption, interpersonal misconduct, abuses of power and Human Resources (HR) related misconduct. These



complaints should be raised via the confidential 'Speak Up' webform, <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/report>. More information on Speak Up can be found here: <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/about-us/tackling-abuse-information-and-updates/speak-up/>

The Supporter Relations Team will pass all complaints related to misconduct and/or international programmes to the relevant specialist team, who will handle the complaint in line with the relevant policies and procedures - not in accordance with this complaints policy.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards or service, actions or lack of action by Oxfam or its staff, volunteers or anybody directly involved in the delivery of our work. It is a criticism that expects a reply and would like things changed. It is a complaint that has not been possible to resolve informally in the first instance.

A disagreement with an Oxfam advocacy or campaigns position is only treated as a complaint within the scope of the Complaints Policy where the complainant is reasonably seen by Oxfam as individually affected adversely by the position, and not simply because they may hold strong views that differ from Oxfam's position.

Oxfam can only respond to complaints that are about an action that Oxfam is responsible for or within its sphere of influence. Oxfam may decide not to deal with a complaint where the recipient of the complaint does not consider it to fall within the definition of a complaint as set out above.

Complaints should be made within 3 months of the relevant incident. Oxfam may be able to respond to a complaint that is older, although the passage of time may make it harder to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.

Who can bring a complaint?

A complaint can only be brought by the individual affected. Oxfam may accept someone else raising the complaint but will require an explanation of why the affected person cannot bring the complaint themselves e.g. mental or physical capacity or being under 18. Oxfam will seek the consent of the affected individual to the bringing of the complaint when possible and will always need to ensure compliance with Data Protection laws.

3) POLICY PURPOSE

Oxfam recognises that ensuring our stakeholders can hold us to account will improve the quality of our work. Oxfam strives to be excellent in all that it does but recognises that this cannot always be the case. When we make a mistake we want and need to be informed. We will use the information provided within complaints to endeavour to put things right and to help us to become more effective.

4) COMMITMENTS

Accessibility – The complaints procedure should be easily accessible. A complaint can therefore be made in writing (post or email) or verbally or via a representative where necessary.

Timeliness – Oxfam endeavours to resolve most complaints within 14 days of receipt. Complex cases are likely to take longer.

Two-way Communication and Engagement – throughout a complaint, Oxfam staff shall maintain regular communication with the person making the complaint keeping them up to date on progress. All actions and decisions will be communicated unless agreed otherwise. If an individual making a complaint is not willing to engage in the investigation or offer requested information Oxfam staff may decline to proceed with the complaint.

Confidentiality and Privacy – At all time Oxfam's staff shall seek to ensure that information provided as part



of the complaint is only shared with Oxfam staff who need to see the information to help resolve the complaint.

Mutual Respect – anyone making a complaint to Oxfam will be treated with courtesy and respect. In return, Oxfam expects people making complaints to communicate their concerns fairly and appropriately and in case of any abuse, Oxfam may decline to proceed with the complaint.

Impartial – no complaint shall be dealt with by someone who has prior involvement in the complaint. When assigning complaints every effort possible shall be made to ensure the staff member investigating the matter does not have any interest in the outcome of the complaint.

Clear and Proportionate Conclusion – where a complaint requires an investigation, the complaint will either be upheld or declined. Where a complaint is declined, the reasoning for this decision will be provided. Where a complaint is upheld, one of the following will be offered; an apology, a proposed solution or action for Oxfam to undertake. The proposed solution or action will be proportionate and reflect the severity of the complaint.

Opportunity for Review – Oxfam recognises that on occasion the person making the complaint may not be satisfied with the investigation undertaken or the outcome. People making complaints will therefore be given the opportunity to have the investigation and outcome reviewed by a senior manager and possibly a small group.

Learning – Oxfam will log and monitor all complaints and their outcomes. This information will regularly be brought to the attention of appropriate senior managers in order that we learn from what we do and how we do it.

5) MONITORING AND EVALUATING

A record of the complaint shall be maintained in accordance with Oxfam data retention policy. Thereafter an anonymised record of the complaint will be maintained for the purposes of monitoring and evaluating complaints centrally. The responsible managers will regularly meet to identify trends in complaints, lessons to be learnt and areas for improvement. An annual report on complaints shall be made to the trustees and available to public.

6) RELEVANT DOCUMENTS OR LINKS

[General complaint handling procedures \(including Festivals and Events\)](#)

[Retail activities and shops complaint handling procedures](#)

[Feedback and complaints website page](#)

[Policy for Fundraising and responding to people in vulnerable circumstances](#)

[Reporting Misconduct website page](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

7) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility for ensuring adherence to the Complaints Policy and maintenance of the complaints data rests with:

General Complaints - Head of Supporter Relations

Fundraising Complaints – Head of Supporter Relations

Festival and Events Complaints – Head of Festivals and Events

Complaints relating to Trading or Shops – Head of Retail Operations

The Head of Governance shall ensure the annual report on complaints is produced.

The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for convening of the managers to monitor and evaluate.