



Chiltern Rangers CIC Fundraising Complaints Policy



Purpose

Chiltern Rangers is committed to fundraising in an open, honest, respectful and accountable way. We recognise that receiving a complaint gives us an opportunity to put things right, improve our fundraising practices and maintain the trust and confidence of our supporters and the public.

This policy explains how we receive, acknowledge, investigate, respond to and learn from complaints about our fundraising activities. It aims to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently, promptly and sensitively.

We will take complaints seriously, regardless of how they are made or who makes them. We will not disadvantage anyone for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints about fundraising carried out by or on behalf of Chiltern Rangers including:

- Fundraising appeals, campaigns and communications, including direct mail, email, telephone, online and social media fundraising.
- Public collections, street fundraising, door-to-door fundraising and fundraising events.
- Fundraising activities carried out by employees, volunteers and representatives.
- Fundraising undertaken by agencies, professional fundraisers and other third parties acting on our behalf.
- The handling of donations, fundraising requests, regular giving arrangements and donor preferences, where these relate to fundraising practice.
- The conduct, behaviour or communications of anyone fundraising on our behalf.
- The way we have responded to a previous fundraising complaint.

This policy applies to complaints from donors, prospective donors, members of the public, beneficiaries, volunteers, employees and other stakeholders.

Where a complaint concerns other areas of our work, we will refer it to the appropriate organisational complaints process or relevant authority. If a complaint raises more than one issue, we will ensure that each element is considered by the appropriate person or team.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, however it is made, about an action taken or a failure to act in relation to our fundraising.

A complaint does not need to be made in writing or use the word "complaint". If it is unclear whether someone is raising a concern or making a complaint, we will generally treat it as a complaint.

Examples include:

- A fundraiser behaving in a way that someone considers rude, intrusive, misleading or disrespectful.
- A person feeling pressured or uncomfortable as a result of a fundraising request.
- A fundraising communication that someone considers misleading, inaccurate or inappropriate.
- A failure to respect someone's request to stop receiving fundraising communications.
- Concerns about how donations are requested, processed or described.
- A complaint about a third-party fundraiser acting on our behalf.
- Dissatisfaction with the way a previous fundraising complaint has been handled.

We welcome informal feedback and concerns and will try to resolve straightforward issues promptly wherever possible. However, any expression of dissatisfaction that meets the definition above will be recorded and handled under this policy.

Our commitments

When handling complaints, we will:

1. **Make our process accessible.** We will make this policy available on our website and provide it to anyone who requests it. We will explain how to make a complaint in clear and straightforward language.
2. **Listen and respond respectfully.** We will treat everyone who raises a complaint with courtesy, sensitivity and respect, regardless of whether we agree with their concerns.
3. **Act promptly.** We will acknowledge complaints and aim to resolve them as quickly as possible, keeping complainants informed of progress.
4. **Be fair and impartial.** Complaints will be investigated objectively, and wherever possible by someone who was not involved in the events complained about.
5. **Be thorough and transparent.** We will consider all relevant evidence, address the substantive points raised and explain our decisions.
6. **Protect confidentiality.** We will handle personal information in accordance with our privacy and data protection obligations.
7. **Put things right.** Where we have made a mistake, we will acknowledge it, apologise where appropriate and take proportionate action to address the problem.
8. **Learn and improve.** We will record complaints, review trends and use the lessons learned to improve our fundraising activities and procedures.

How to make a complaint

A complaint can be made in any of the following ways:

By email: info@chilternrangers.co.uk

By post: Chiltern Rangers, Kingsmead Depot 60 Fennels Road, High Wycombe, HP11 1SL

By telephone: 01494 474486

In person: Through any member of our team, who will pass the complaint to our Operations Director.

A complainant may also ask someone else to make a complaint on their behalf. Where necessary, we may ask for confirmation that the person has consented to this.

We encourage complainants to provide as much relevant information as they can, including:

- Their name and preferred contact details.
- A description of what happened and when.
- The fundraising activity, communication or fundraiser involved, if known.
- Any relevant supporting information or evidence.
- What they would like us to do to resolve the matter.

However, we will not insist on a complainant providing all of this information before we accept a complaint. We will help them provide any information needed to investigate it.

Complaints may be made anonymously. We will consider anonymous complaints as far as possible, although our ability to investigate and provide an individual response may be limited.

Receiving and recording complaints

All employees, volunteers and representatives who receive a complaint about fundraising must pass it promptly to our Operations Director, normally within two working days.

Complaints received by third-party fundraisers or agencies acting on our behalf must be reported to us promptly in accordance with the relevant contract or written agreement. We remain responsible for ensuring that complaints about fundraising carried out on our behalf are appropriately handled.

The person responsible for complaints will record each complaint in our complaints register, including:

- The date the complaint was received.
- The complainant's details, where provided, and preferred method of contact.
- A summary of the complaint and the fundraising activity concerned.
- The date the complaint was acknowledged.
- The person responsible for investigating it.
- The steps taken during the investigation.
- The findings, decision and reasons for the decision.
- Any action taken to resolve the complaint.
- The date the complaint was closed.

- Any lessons learned and improvements identified.

We will only collect and retain information that is necessary for handling the complaint and meeting our legal and regulatory obligations.

Acknowledgement and timescales

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all complaints within five working days.

Our acknowledgement will normally include:

- Confirmation that we have received the complaint.
- The name or role of the person handling it.
- An outline of the investigation and complaints process.
- An indication of when the complainant can expect a response.
- A request for any further information that may be needed.

We aim to provide a full response within 20 working days of receiving the complaint.

Some complaints may require more time to investigate, for example where several people or third-party organisations are involved, or where the complaint is particularly complex. If we cannot meet the expected timescale, we will contact the complainant before it expires, explain the reason for the delay and give an updated estimate of when they can expect a response.

We will keep the complainant informed of any further significant delays.

Where a complaint can be resolved quickly and informally, we will aim to do so without unnecessary steps. We will still record the complaint and the outcome.

Investigating complaints

The person responsible for investigating a complaint will:

1. Review the complaint and clarify the issues raised, where necessary.
2. Establish what outcome the complainant is seeking and whether that outcome is achievable.
3. Identify the relevant people, records, fundraising materials and other evidence.
4. Give anyone who is the subject of the complaint an appropriate opportunity to respond to the allegations, where practicable and consistent with confidentiality and fairness.
5. Consider all relevant evidence objectively and impartially.
6. Determine whether our fundraising activities and the conduct of anyone acting on our behalf met the standards expected of us.
7. Make recommendations for resolving the complaint and preventing similar issues in future.

Wherever possible, the investigation will be carried out by someone who was not involved in the fundraising activity or events complained about.

If a complaint concerns the person who would normally investigate it, it will be referred to the Chiltern Rangers Board. If we cannot investigate it impartially within the organisation, we may appoint an independent person to investigate it.

We will take reasonable steps to investigate complaints even if the complainant does not provide every piece of information requested. We will also consider the needs and circumstances of the complainant, including any reasonable adjustments that may be needed to enable them to participate in the process.

Decision and response

Following the investigation, we will provide the complainant with a written response, unless they have requested another suitable method of communication.

Our response will:

- Summarise the complaint and the issues investigated.
- Explain the evidence and information considered.
- Set out our findings on the substantive points raised.
- Explain whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, and give clear reasons for the decision.
- Explain any action we have taken or intend to take to resolve the complaint.
- Provide information about any further review or escalation options available.

We will ensure that our decision is evidence-based, fair and proportionate.

Where we identify that something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and apologise where appropriate. Depending on the circumstances, possible remedies may include:

- A verbal or written apology.
- An explanation or clarification of the fundraising activity.
- Correcting inaccurate or misleading information.
- Stopping or amending a fundraising communication or activity.
- Updating donor preferences or removing someone from relevant fundraising contact lists.
- Providing a refund or arranging the return of a donation where appropriate and lawful.
- Providing additional training or guidance to staff, volunteers or third-party fundraisers.
- Reviewing or changing relevant fundraising procedures, materials or contracts.
- Taking appropriate action to prevent a similar issue occurring again.

We will explain any action that we are unable to take and why it is not appropriate or possible.

Escalation and review

If a complainant is dissatisfied with our response, they may request a review by contacting our Operations Director within 20 working days of receiving our decision.

They should explain which aspects of the response they disagree with and what they would like us to reconsider.

Where possible, the review will be carried out by a board member who was not involved in the original investigation or decision. We aim to acknowledge a review request within five working days and provide a final response within 20 working days.

If further time is needed, we will explain the reasons and keep the complainant informed.

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied after completing our complaints process, they may be able to refer their complaint to the relevant fundraising regulator, subject to its remit and requirements.

Fundraising Regulator

The Fundraising Regulator considers complaints about fundraising in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and certain fundraising in Scotland. It generally expects complainants to have first raised their concerns with the fundraising organisation and usually allows the organisation four weeks to respond.

Website: <https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/service/complaints-about-fundraising>

Serious concerns and safeguarding

We will consider whether a complaint raises any serious or urgent concerns, including potential safeguarding risks, suspected fraud, criminal activity, serious misconduct or significant risks to the public.

Where such concerns arise, we will promptly refer the matter to the appropriate senior person or safeguarding lead and take any immediate steps needed to protect individuals or prevent further harm.

We may need to refer serious concerns to relevant statutory authorities, regulators or law enforcement agencies, as appropriate. This may happen alongside our internal complaints process.

Where a complaint includes a safeguarding concern, the safeguarding procedure will be followed in addition to this policy.

Confidentiality and data protection

We will treat complaints sensitively and share information only with people who need it to investigate, respond to or oversee the complaint, or where disclosure is otherwise required or permitted by law.

We will process personal data in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and our privacy policy. Complaint records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with our data retention schedule.

We will explain to complainants that we may need to share relevant information with staff members, volunteers, third-party fundraisers or others involved in the events complained about, where necessary to investigate the matter fairly.

We will also consider the confidentiality and wellbeing of employees, volunteers and others who are the subject of a complaint, ensuring they have an appropriate opportunity to respond.

Unreasonable or abusive behaviour

We understand that people may feel upset or frustrated when making a complaint, and we will always aim to respond with patience, understanding and respect.

If a complainant behaves in an abusive, threatening or persistently unreasonable way, we may take proportionate steps to protect our staff, volunteers and others involved in handling the complaint.

Such steps may include agreeing appropriate communication arrangements, setting reasonable limits on contact or, in exceptional circumstances, restricting the way in which we communicate with the complainant.

Any restrictions will be proportionate, clearly explained and reviewed as appropriate. We will not use this provision to avoid investigating a genuine complaint or to discourage someone from raising concerns.

Complaints involving third-party fundraisers

Where fundraising is carried out on our behalf by an external agency, professional fundraiser or other third party, we remain responsible for ensuring that complaints about that fundraising are handled appropriately.

We will ensure that relevant contracts and written agreements set out the third party's responsibility to:

- Make our complaints policy and process available to the people they engage with, where appropriate.
- Pass complaints about our fundraising to us promptly.
- Cooperate fully with our investigations and provide relevant evidence.

- Keep appropriate records of complaints and the action taken.
- Take any corrective action required under the agreement.
- Provide information that helps us monitor performance and identify potential risks.

We will monitor complaints involving third parties and take appropriate action if we identify concerns about their conduct or compliance with our standards.

Learning and continuous improvement

We view complaints as an important source of information that can help us improve our fundraising and strengthen relationships with supporters.

We will regularly review complaints to identify patterns, recurring issues, risks and opportunities for improvement.

The complaints register will be reviewed by our Operations Director at least quarterly. Significant trends, serious complaints and any recommendations for organisational improvement will be reported to the Senior Management Team and, where appropriate, the Chiltern Rangers Board.

We will use the information gathered to consider whether changes are needed to our fundraising activities, training, communications, policies, procedures or relationships with third-party fundraisers.

Where a complaint has resulted in a change, we will record the action taken and, where appropriate, communicate the learning to relevant employees, volunteers, board members and external partners.

Monitoring and reporting

Chiltern Rangers will monitor the operation of this policy to ensure that complaints are being handled consistently and within the expected timescales.

We will maintain accurate records of the number and nature of complaints received, their outcomes and any improvements made as a result.

The Chiltern Rangers Board will receive updates at our bi-annual board meetings on fundraising complaints, including relevant trends, serious issues, actions taken and lessons learned.

Where legally required, we will include information about fundraising complaints in our annual report and accounts, in accordance with applicable charity reporting requirements.