



# Complaints Handling Policy

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MATW Project Department  
of Policy and Governance

## INTRODUCTION

The Board of MATW International is committed to high standards of ethical conduct and accordingly places great care in ensuring **complaints and feedback are handled fairly & effectively**.

## PURPOSE

This policy provides a comprehensive framework to ensure that all feedback and complaints received by MATW International are handled in a **fair, accessible, responsive, and efficient** manner. Its primary aims are to:

- Establish clear principles and procedures for effective complaint management.
- Empower all stakeholders, including staff, partners, and beneficiaries, with a transparent understanding of how to provide feedback and raise concerns.
- Foster a culture of continuous improvement, where insights from feedback and complaints contribute to enhancing our services and achieving our mission.

## DEFINITIONS

**‘Complaint’** is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

**‘Complaint handling/management system’**: All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.

**‘Dispute’**: An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

**‘Feedback’**: Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

**‘Grievance’**: A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.

**‘Policy’**: A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.

**‘Procedure’:** A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

**Stakeholder:** Any individual or group that has an interest in, or is affected by, the operations and outcomes of MATW International, including beneficiaries, partners, staff, volunteers, donors, and the public

## SCOPE:

This policy applies to the handling of feedback and complaints from program partners and people we work with and for, including staff, partners, volunteers, people we work with and for or anybody directly involved in the delivery of our programs. This policy applies to all program activities whether implemented in the United Kingdom or internationally. The policy applies equally to programs directly implemented by MATW International or those implemented through our partners.

## POLICY

Our complaint handling policy is modelled on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration into organisational culture. The following articulates our complaints handling policy:

- 1- People focus:** We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling. Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame. People making complaints will be:
  - provided with information about our complaint handling process and how to access it
  - listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
  - provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review
- 2- No detriment to people making complaints:** We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.
- 3- Anonymous complaints:** We accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

- 4- Accessibility:** We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised, on our website (if available). We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance. If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/ or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish. Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).
- 5- No charge:** Complaining to us is free.
- 6- Early resolution:** Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with us. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.
- 7- Responsiveness:** We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints. We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.
- 8- Objectivity and fairness:** We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about. Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.
- 9- Responding flexibly:** Our staff are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. We will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives. We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.
- 10- Confidentiality:** We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

- 11- Complaints involving multiple agencies:** Where a complaint involves multiple organisations, we will work with the other organisation/s where possible, to ensure that communication with the person making a complaint and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.
- a. Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, communication and information sharing between the parties will also be organised to facilitate a timely response to the complaint.
  - b. Where a complaint involves multiple areas within our organisation, responsibility for communicating with the person making the complaint and/or their representative will also be coordinated.
  - c. Where our services are contracted out, we expect contracted service providers to have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system. We take complaints not only about the actions of our staff but also the actions of our service providers.
- 12- Empowerment of staff:** All staff managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities. Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.
- 13- Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints:** We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time our success depends on:
- our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
  - the health, safety and security of our staff, and
  - our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

- 14- MATW UK expects both the Board and the staff** (at all levels) to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. The following outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented:

| Who   | Commitment  | How  |
|---|---|--|
| Chair of the governing body   | Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution | <p>Report to the governing body on our complaint handling.</p> <p>Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints.</p> <p>Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.</p> <p>Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements.</p> <p>Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.</p> |
| Staff whose duties include complaint handling (may include chair of the governing body) | Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices                      | <p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Assist people to make a complaint, if needed.</p> <p>Comply with our policy and associated procedures.</p> <p>Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve our complaints management system.</p> <p>Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by management.</p>  |
| All staff   | Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices.            | <p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Be aware of our complaint handling policies and procedures.</p> <p>Assist people who wish to make complaints access our complaints process.</p> <p>Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints to resolve matters promptly.</p>   |

## RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Chair is responsible for bringing this policy to the attention of prospective Board members.
- All Board members and staff are responsible for respecting this policy.

## PROCEDURES

The effective and consistent handling of feedback and complaints at MATW International follows a structured process, ensuring fairness, transparency, and responsiveness at every stage.

### 1. Receive and Log the Complaint

- **Channels for Complaint Submission:** Complaints can be submitted through various accessible channels, including:
  - Email to a designated complaints address (e.g., [complaints@matwinternational.org](mailto:complaints@matwinternational.org))
  - Via a complaints form on our website (if applicable)
  - In writing (postal mail)
  - Verbally (in person or by phone) to any staff member, who must then ensure it is formally logged.
- **Initial Capture:** Upon receipt, all complaints, unless resolved immediately at the point of contact, will be formally logged. This logging process will capture essential information to facilitate proper handling and future analysis.
- **Unique Identifier:** Each complaint will be assigned a unique identifier or case number for tracking purposes.
- **Required Information for Logging:** The complaint record will include, but is not limited to:
  - Contact information of the person making the complaint (unless anonymous) and the date the complaint was received.
  - A clear description of the issues raised by the complainant.
  - The desired outcome or resolution sought by the complainant.
  - Any other relevant background information or supporting documentation provided.
  - Details of any additional support, access, or communication requirements the complainant may have (e.g., interpreter, specific communication medium).

## 2. Acknowledge the Complaint

- **Prompt Acknowledgment:** We are committed to acknowledging receipt of each formal complaint promptly, ideally within **3-5 working days** of receiving it.
- **Acknowledgment Method:** The acknowledgment will be sent using the most appropriate medium, considering the complainant's stated preferences (e.g., email, letter, phone call).
- **Content of Acknowledgment:** The acknowledgment will include:
  - Confirmation that the complaint has been received and logged.
  - The unique identifier/case number for their complaint.
  - A brief overview of our complaint handling process.
  - Estimated timeframes for further communication or resolution (where possible).
  - Contact details for the person or department responsible for managing their complaint.
  - An offer of an explanation or apology at this stage, if appropriate and without prejudice to the investigation outcome.

## 3. Assess and Prioritise the Complaint

- **Initial Assessment:** Following acknowledgment, an initial assessment will be conducted to confirm:
  - Whether the issue(s) raised fall within the scope of MATW International's responsibility and control.
  - If the complaint raises concerns about people's health, safety, security, or safeguarding.
  - The urgency, complexity, and potential seriousness of the complaint.
  - The potential impact on the complainant and the organisation if resolution is delayed.
  - Whether the complaint involves multiple issues, each requiring separate consideration.
  - Whether the complaint requires the involvement or notification of other internal departments or external organisations (e.g., partner agencies, safeguarding bodies, regulators).
- **Prioritisation:** Complaints will be prioritised based on the above assessment, particularly focusing on:
  - Immediate risks to safety or security (requiring immediate escalation).
  - High-impact or sensitive issues.
  - Regulatory reporting requirements.
- **Complaint Management Plan:** Based on the assessment, a plan will be developed outlining the necessary steps for managing the complaint, including expected actions and responsible parties.

#### 4. Investigate the Complaint

- **Impartial Investigation:** All complaints will be investigated with integrity, objectivity, and impartiality. The person(s) investigating a complaint will be different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about, and any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be responsibly managed.
- **Information Gathering:** The investigation process may involve:
  - Gathering relevant information, documentation, and evidence.
  - Interviewing relevant staff members, volunteers, partners, or other witnesses.
  - Seeking clarification or further information from the complainant.
  - Consulting with subject matter experts as required.
- **Communication During Investigation:** We will keep the person making the complaint informed of the progress of their complaint, especially if there are any significant delays or changes to anticipated timeframes.
- **Timely Resolution:** We aim to resolve most complaints within **20 working days** from the date of acknowledgment. If a complaint is complex and requires more time, we will notify the complainant of the delay and provide an updated timeframe.

#### 5. Determine Outcome and Provide Reasons for Decision

- **Outcome Determination:** Following the investigation, a thorough review of all gathered information will be conducted to determine the outcome of the complaint and any necessary actions.
- **Communication of Outcome:** We will contact the person making the complaint and advise them in a clear, accessible, and comprehensive manner:
  - The outcome of the complaint (e.g., upheld, partially upheld, not upheld).
  - The clear reason(s) for our decision, based on the findings of the investigation.
  - Any specific remedies or resolutions proposed or implemented (e.g., apology, explanation, practical action, policy change, service improvement).
  - Information about any options for further internal review that may be available to the complainant.

#### 6. Close the Complaint and Document

- **Formal Closure:** Once the outcome has been communicated and any agreed actions have been taken, the complaint will be formally closed in our records.

- **Documentation:** Comprehensive documentation of the complaint, the investigation process, decision-making, and resolution will be maintained in the complaint file. This includes all correspondence, notes, and relevant evidence.
- **Data Analysis:** Data from closed complaints will be regularly analysed to identify trends, recurring issues, systemic problems, and opportunities for continuous improvement in our services, policies, and practices. This analysis will feed into our learning and strategic planning processes.

## 7. Internal Review and Escalation

- **Right to Internal Review:** If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the way it was handled, they have the right to request an internal review.
- **Process for Internal Review:**
  - Requests for internal review must typically be made within a specified timeframe (e.g., 10 working days) from the date of receiving the outcome.
  - The review will be conducted by a senior staff member or a designated review panel, who was not involved in the original complaint handling process, to ensure independence and impartiality.
  - The reviewer(s) will examine the original complaint, the investigation, the decision, and any new information provided by the complainant.
  - The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the internal review and the reasons for the decision within a set timeframe (e.g., 15 working days).

## 8. Learning and Continuous Improvement

- **Systemic Feedback:** Information gathered from all stages of the complaint handling process, including trends and root causes identified through data analysis, will be regularly reported to senior management and the Board.
- **Actionable Insights:** These insights will be used to inform improvements in service delivery, review and amend policies and procedures, enhance staff training, and strengthen overall governance and accountability.

## Appendix A: Complaints Handling Form

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Date of Complaint:                 |  |
| Complainant's Name:                |  |
| Contact Information (email/phone): |  |
| Summary of Complaint:              |  |
| Staff Member Receiving Complaint:  |  |
| Initial Action Taken:              |  |
| Investigation Outcome:             |  |
| Resolution/Follow-up Action:       |  |

### **AUTHORISED BY**

Name: Mac Ismail

Signature:

Date: 04 September 2023