



# Complaints Policy and Procedure

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The USPCA is committed to providing a high quality, transparent and accessible service to everyone we deal with. In order to do this we need you to tell us when we get things wrong. We want to help resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.

We handle any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response as a complaint. We listen to your complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our service.

## **What is a complaint?**

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A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

### **Our policy covers complaints about:**

- the standard of service you should expect from us
- the behaviour of our staff in delivering that service
- any action, or lack of action, by our staff or others engaged on Society business

We refer to these complaints as "service complaints".

### **Our complaints policy does not cover:**

- comments about our policies or policy decisions
- dissatisfaction or complaints expressed with our policies
- matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure
- anonymous complaints

## **Our standards for handling complaints**

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- We can receive complaints by letter or email, or alternatively if required by virtue of reasonable adjustments. We treat all complaints seriously.
- You can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times. We expect that you will also treat our staff dealing with your complaint with the same courtesy, respect and fairness.
- We will treat your complaint in confidence.

- We will deal with your service complaint promptly. We will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within five working days where we have a return address and you can expect to have a full reply within 20 working days. In a few cases we will not be able to send a full reply within 20 working days of receipt, for example if your complaint is very complex. If this happens, we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full, keeping you fully informed of progress.
- We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your:
  - sex or legal marital or same-sex partnership status: this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed)
  - sexual orientation
  - colour or race: this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality
  - disability
  - religious or political beliefs, or trade union affiliation
  - any other unjustifiable factors, for example language difficulties, age, pregnancy and maternity.

### **Third Party Reporting**

Complainants may wish to have a third party act on their behalf. A third party is any person or organisation acting on behalf of or making enquiries for the complainant. For example, third parties may include:

- advice organisations
- professionals such as solicitors
- family members or friends

Where a third party is helping a complainant with a particular complaint, we need written consent to that effect. Where we have this authority, we will endeavour to take all possible steps to keep the third party informed of progress on the complaint.

We do not need written consent if a MP or elected Councillor is helping a constituent with a complaint, and we can disclose information to them in response to their enquiries.

Also, some lawyers and attorneys are legally empowered in certain circumstances to act on behalf of a complainant, and consent to disclose information is not required.

## **Confidentiality**

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All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, subject to the need to disclose information as required by statutory authorities.

## **How to complain to us**

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If you wish to make a complaint, you can do so by email or letter.

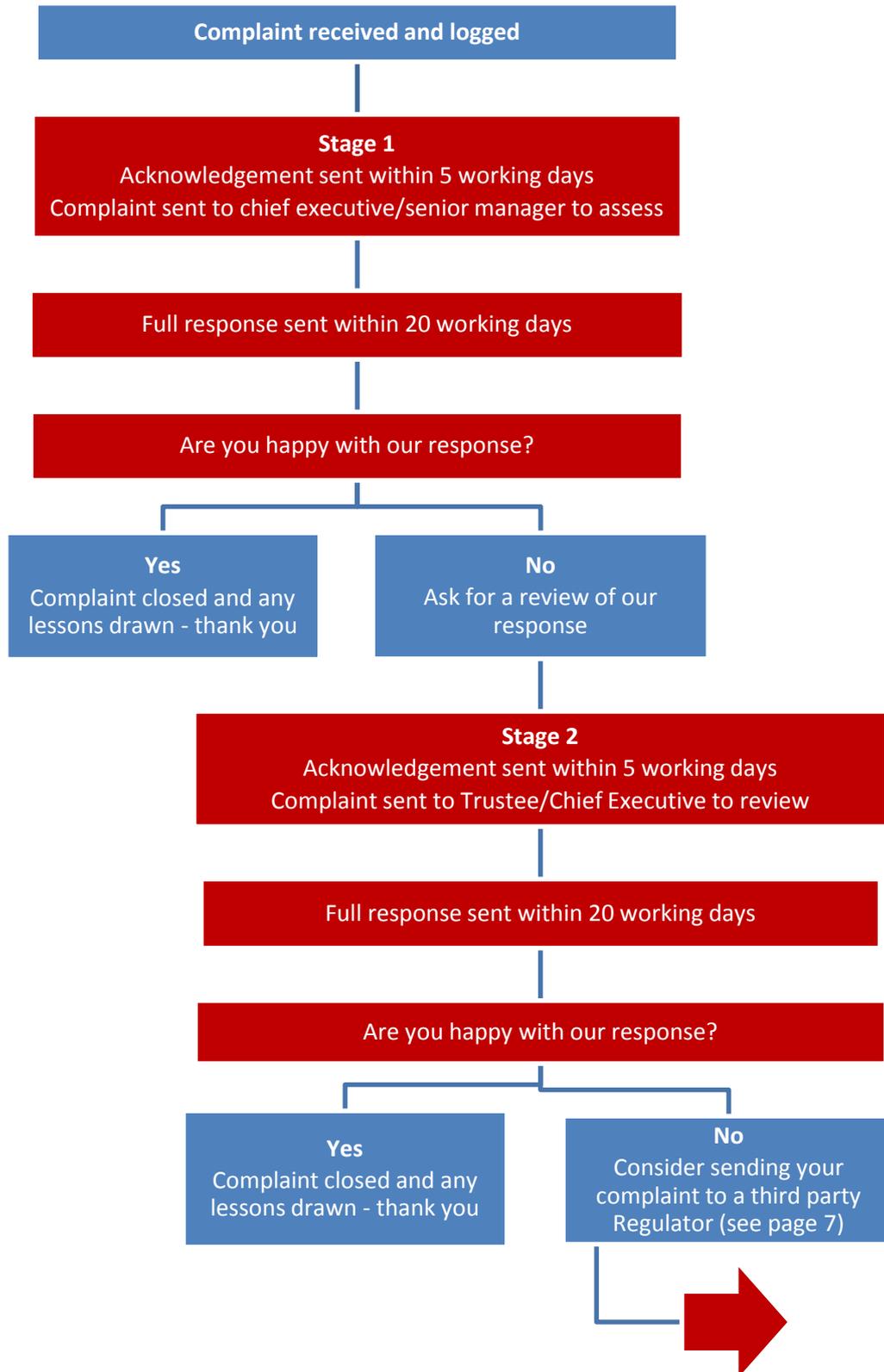
If you are disabled, and need a reasonable adjustment to ensure you can register your complaint, you can contact us alternatively by:

- telephone (one of our officers will help you by writing out your complaint)
- asking a member of staff to help you in writing out your complaint

Our contact details are in the Contacting Us section below. If you require different adjustments, let us know and we will try and put those arrangements in place where we can.

## How we will respond to your complaint

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## **Service complaints procedure**

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We have a two-stage service complaints handling procedure, explained above. At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clarity and detail as possible, including providing any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint. If we do not have all the details required to deal with the complaint, we may contact you and ask you for further information.

### **Stage 1**

This is the first opportunity for us to resolve your dissatisfaction. We expect the majority of complaints to be resolved at this stage. On receipt of your complaint the Chief Executive or other senior manager will respond to your complaint.

### **Stage 2**

If you are dissatisfied with the response at stage 1, you may request a review. This will be carried out by a Trustee or the Chief Executive (if not the respondent at stage 1). This completes our procedure for handling service complaints.

## **If you are still dissatisfied**

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If having followed the two stages of our service complaints procedure you remain dissatisfied, you may wish to refer your complaint to one of the Regulators outlined below:

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. [www.charitycommissionni.org.uk](http://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk)

The Fundraising Regulator. [www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk](http://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk)

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. [www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)

## **Timescales**

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### **Stage 1**

We will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days of receiving each complaint. We will send a full response within 20 working days of receiving each complaint.

### **Stage 2**

We will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days of receiving each complaint. We will send a full response within 20 working days of receiving each complaint.

### **Extending time limits**

We aim to complete our investigation into all complaints received about our service within the timescales set out above. However, in a limited number of cases - for example, if a complaint is very complex or requires further breakdown, it may be necessary to extend the time limit to ensure we have all the information necessary to deal with it. If this is the case we will keep you informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and inform you of next steps.

### **Remedies**

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When we get things wrong we will act to:

- accept responsibility and apologise
- explain what went wrong and why, and
- put things right by making any changes required
- learn lessons from mistakes and change policies and practices where proportionate and sensible to do so

The action we take to put matters right (i.e. redress) in response to a service complaint can include any combination of the remedies set out in the list below. The general principle we follow is that complainants should, so far as possible, be put in the position they would have been in, had things not gone wrong.

The remedy applied needs to be proportionate and appropriate to the failure in service, and take into account what redress people seek when they complain. An apology is generally the most appropriate action, but other action may also be necessary in some circumstances.

#### **List of remedies**

- A full apology, explaining what happened and/or what went wrong. ( an apology is not an acceptance of liability under Section 2 of the Compensation Act 2006)
- Remedial action, which may include reviewing or changing a decision on the service given to an individual complainant

- Provide the service required in first instance (immediately, if appropriate)
- Putting things right (for example a change of procedure to prevent future difficulties of a similar kind, either for the complainant or others)
- Training or supervising staff; or a combination of both
- Financial compensation

## **Recording complaints**

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Complaint details, outcomes and actions taken are recorded by us and used for service improvement. We record all complaints we receive and collate data from them to help us understand what types of problems are most prevalent, and how well we are doing to resolve them.

We value your feedback and expect to use it to help us to:

- get things right in the future if we have not done so already
- become more customer focused
- be more open and accountable
- act fairly and proportionately
- seek continuous improvement

We will handle your information so that it is only processed and retained appropriately and legally, in line with data protection legislation.

## **Contacting us**

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All complaints and requests for review under our complaints procedure should be sent as follows:

By post:                      Chief Executive  
   USPCA  
   Unit 6 Carnbane Industrial Estate  
   Newry  
   BT35 6QH

By email:                      [headoffice@uspca.co.uk](mailto:headoffice@uspca.co.uk)

If you are unable to contact us in writing as above, and require a reasonable adjustment because you are a disabled person, you may contact us as follows: **Telephone:** 028 3025 1000