

SUPPORTING WITH COMPLAINTS



Poppyscotland is committed to providing excellent services and we believe the best way to do this is to listen to the views of our volunteers, donors and supporters. In every organisation, complaints are inevitable, no matter how streamlined processes may be. Complaints must always be acknowledged and dealt with effectively. By ignoring or dismissing complaints, we are effectively telling an individual that we don't value their opinions.

This guide explains what to do if you receive a complaint about any aspect of the fundraising activity, services or support from Poppyscotland. It also provides details on the Poppyscotland complaints process and the escalation process for complaints.

What to do if a member of the public or another volunteer has a complaint:

Take a step back: It can be difficult to remain impassive in the face of criticism, but an emotional response will only serve to irritate the situation further.

Give your full attention and listen to the whole problem before responding: Put yourself in their shoes - if you had a problem, you would want someone to listen to you. Appearing disinterested, or attempting to argue back, will only exacerbate the situation.

Don't jump the gun: You might deal with complaints on a regular basis and may well have handled a similar situation before. However, for the supporter, their complaint is unique to them. Treat them as an important individual by listening to their problem in full.

Try to understand: In the face of a complaint, it's easy to be defensive - particularly if you don't believe you (or we) are at fault. However, you should attempt to put yourself in the supporters' shoes. If you were on the receiving end of their experience, would you personally be satisfied?

Always use your initiative when dealing with complaints: If the blame lies with one volunteer or member of staff, it is often best to remove the supporter from the situation. This can defuse tension and emotion and help the supporter to re-evaluate their anger.

Never pass the individual with a complaint around from person to person: Each complaint should ideally be handled by one person. Therefore, we should always ensure that the person assigned to the case has the authority to deal with the situation. It is important to escalate complaints to a member to the Poppyscotland team, this allows the most appropriate team member to support with the concern.

Complaints not related to our fundraising activity

As a Volunteer Organiser, you may be able to listen to a complaint and resolve it on a local level. Not every complaint will need to be dealt with by the team at Poppyscotland, however, it is always best to let us know if you have received a complaint. This will allow us to track any issues and support appropriately.

We have a full complaints process, this can be found at www.poppyscotland.org.uk/contact-us. Members of the public and volunteers can be directed to formally log their complaint through this channel, or if you take their contact information, you can forward the details of the complaint along with a contact telephone number and email address to supportercare@poppyScotland.org.uk.

What is a fundraising complaint?

A fundraising complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about our fundraising, whether justified or not. A fundraising complaint would usually be made by a member of the public rather than a volunteer or member of staff.

It is a regulatory requirement that we recognise, acknowledge and, if necessary, investigate complaints about our fundraising. Since the Charities Act 2016 became law it has been a requirement to publish the total of all fundraising complaints we receive. To do that accurately, we need to know about all fundraising complaints.

What is not a fundraising complaint?

We must be careful not to allow volunteer or staff grievances to spill over into the complaint category, unless they are complaints about Poppyscotland's fundraising activities.

Our **Whistleblowing** Help Sheet and full policy are available at www.poppyscotland.org.uk/volunteer-guide and provide guidance on how we manage internal concerns and complaints. This sort of feedback is important for other reasons and should always be recognised and escalated in the appropriate way.

How to report a fundraising complaint

Your volunteers should be encouraged to report complaints to you at the earliest opportunity. As a Volunteer Organiser, we ask that you proactively ask your team(s) whether they have received any complaints about our fundraising.

There are two types of reportable complaint:

1. When the complainant wants a response from Poppyscotland, you should pass their details to your Poppy Appeal Organiser, together with a description of the complaint, as soon as you can. Ideally, you should do this within 24 hours of the complaint being made. The referral should include the complainant's name and contact information as well as details of the complaint; or
2. When the complainant does not leave their contact details, we may not be able to respond to them, however, we do still want to know about the complaint. This will help to build a clearer nationwide picture of our engagement with the public. Please share these complaints with your Poppy Appeal Organiser.

Complaints and compliance in Scotland

The Scottish Fundraising Standards Panel fundraising standards and deal with fundraising complaints relating to Scottish registered charities. www.goodfundraising.scot has an online form and further guidance on the legislation around fundraising complaints in Scotland.

