



Islamic Relief Worldwide

IRW Complaints Management and Feedback Policy

Version management

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“God commands justice and fair dealing”

Quran (16:90)

Introduction

As part of Islamic Relief Worldwide’s (IRW) accountability framework, values and standards such as the [Core Humanitarian Standards](#), we welcome and prioritise addressing complaints and receiving feedback. We see the reporting, investigation and determination of complaints and receiving feedback as essential in giving members of our target communities, stakeholders, staff, and volunteers the confidence to help us to continuously do better in our services. IRW believes in a culture where our staff (at all levels) and volunteers accept the need to improve and address any injustice or inefficiency in our work.

It is important to differentiate between the IRW Complaints policy and the [Grievance Policy](#) and Procedure for staff, which explains the process for staff with concerns about their work, working conditions or relationships with colleagues that they wish to raise with management. These types of issues will be re-directed to HR/Int HR to follow the Grievance Policy route where an informal resolution would be encouraged prior to invoking the formal grievance procedure.

Policy Statement

IRW welcomes complaints and feedback from members of our target communities, stakeholder’s, staff, volunteers and those working on behalf of Islamic Relief (contractors, implementing partners) as a key mechanism to learn and improve. The complaints process is integral to meeting our values of Excellence (Ihsan), Compassion (Rahma), Social Justice (Adl) and Custodianship (Amana). In learning from the complaints and feedback we receive, we also strive to continually develop and learn about the complaints process itself to provide an effective complaints and response mechanism which is safe, confidential, transparent and accessible to those we serve and work in partnership with.

Scope

This Policy outlines IRW's position on complaints handling received directly at IRW's Headquarters and those escalated from our Field Offices (as per the [Field Office Complaints Policy](#)).

The Field Office Complaints Policy outlines the complaints handling process for issues identified and received by our Field Offices and the escalation of serious complaints to IRW.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

In respect of a complaint relating to a third-party with whom IRW may or may not have a link, IRW will identify for the complainant who in that third-party should be contacted to determine their complaint. IRW will also take steps to determine whether the actions of the third-party impacts upon IRW and is a matter that needs reporting to other authorities.

This policy's objectives are:

- To create a standardised, trusted, reliable, traceable and comprehensive system to raise a complaint
- To register, investigate, take remedial action and provide feedback on complaints in a timely and systemic way
- To ensure internal and external transparency of the complaints handling procedures
- To develop and improve organisational management of complaints, policy and procedures
- To gain a better understanding of the nature and variety of complaints to ensure our policies and procedures adequately reflect the needs of those whom we serve
- To foster accountability and improvement at all levels of the organisation
- Ensure complaints are handled consistently and fairly

Responsibilities

Office of the General Counsel Division

Complaints Administrator

- Processing information about complaints in a confidential manner and in accordance with data protection and information security requirements
- Acknowledging receipt to the complainant and logging complaints
- Maintaining and updating complaints case files
- Liaising confidentially with complainants to obtain further information and provide updates as and when appropriate
- Liaising with internal /external stakeholders as appropriate
- Obtaining updates on case progress and ensuring the complaint is being managed in a timely way

- Case closure and notification of final outcomes to complainants as and when appropriate
- Produce management reports on complaints

Policy and Compliance Manager

- Day to day management of IRW's complaints receiving and handling process
- Monitor the escalation process of sensitive Field Office Complaints and monthly reporting requirements in accordance with the Field Office Complaints Policy
- Monitor compliance with IRW Complaints Policy
- Responsibility for identifying and reporting potential breaches of operational policy
- Liaison with internal stakeholders to ensure the recording of all issues received by IRW
- Escalation of serious complaints requiring formal investigation to Investigations Team (These cases will then be processed in accordance with the IRW Investigations Process with the oversight of the Head of Internal Audit and Investigations)

General Counsel

- Oversee serious incidents/complaints
- External reporting requirements
- Determining complaints appeals

Staff and Volunteers

- Ensuring all complaints received, regardless of source are shared upon receipt with IRW Complaints via complaints@irworldwide.org who will have oversight of dealing with the complaint
- Being open and receptive to feedback and complaints
- Co-operating and participating in complaints investigations
- Reporting complaints where dissatisfaction is voiced about the actions and/or inactions of IRW and supporting complainant in making a complaint through the correct complaint referral mechanism referenced in this policy

Complaint Focal Points (Field Office Based)

- Processing information about complaints in a confidential manner and in accordance with data protection and information security requirements.
- Escalation of serious complaints to Headquarters as outlined in the [Field Office Complaints Policy](#)
- Responsibilities as outlined in the Field Office Complaints Policy

Defining a complaint

For the purpose of this policy, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or unhappiness about the standards or quality of service, actions or inaction, by IRW or its staff and volunteers or anyone acting in any capacity on behalf of IRW.

Complaints could include the following (which is not an exhaustive list):

- Concern from a user or beneficiary of our service, stakeholder or staff member about the quality of services we have provided
- Safeguarding concerns (Complaints will be processed in accordance with dedicated policies):
[Safeguarding](#), [Child Safeguarding](#) and [Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and Harassment](#) (PSEAH)
- Concern from a member of the public or supporter about a particular fundraising approach or campaign action
- Concern about the conduct and behaviour of staff or volunteers or those representing Islamic Relief
- The reporting of suspected fraud, bribery or corruption (complaints will be processed in accordance with the [Anti-Fraud and Bribery and Corruption Policy](#))
- Concerns about Modern Slavery

A complaint is not:

- A routine request for information
- A general query about the work of IRW
- A request for mediation
- A contractual dispute
- A request to amend records, for example, cancelling a donation or updating contact details
- A request to unsubscribe from an IRW service, or change marketing preferences
- A request for support (Please be aware that we are unable to respond to such requests received by IRW complaints)

A complaint to IRW must be in relation to some action and/or inaction for which IRW is responsible for or is within our organisational control and jurisdiction. Complaints that are upheld against staff could lead to disciplinary action in line with our [Disciplinary Policy](#).

Categorisation of complaints:

Partially sensitive complaints and feedback

Complaints and community feedback relating to programme quality, quantity, timeliness, inclusiveness, equitability or effectiveness of assistance received. These do not require escalation to Headquarters unless received in high frequency from the same project/location or pose wider reputational, financial or legal risks. These should be dealt with under the management of the Country Management Team with the oversight of Country Director/Head of Mission. All actions should be documented and or investigated as necessary.

Sensitive complaints:

Safeguarding – complaints concerning welfare or protection of children and vulnerable adults and/or related to physical, verbal or sexual harassment, assault, exploitation and abuse, safety and security, Modern Slavery or dignity at work issues. complaints involving safeguarding issues should be notified to the Safeguarding Focal Point (SFP) and IRW Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@irworldwide.org)

All suspected **Fraud, bribery, corruption, reputational risk, physical violence, legal concerns or complaints involving a country senior management team member** (irrespective of whether the concerns are verified) should be notified immediately to Headquarters via complaints@irworldwide.org

Please do not undertake any local investigation or fact finding (all categories of sensitive complaints above) until the matter has been discussed and agreed by relevant IRW Leads.

Who can make a complaint?

IRW Headquarters accepts complaints from anywhere in the world and in particular from:

- Users or members of target communities receiving our services
- Partner organisations
- Local communities or individuals with whom we work
- Donors
- Member of the public whether an individual, company or other entity in the UK or around the world.
- Staff members wishing to complain should first refer to the IRW [Grievance Policy](#) and Procedure which encourages staff in the first instance to try and resolve matters informally in consultation with their line manager (where appropriate). This details the process for submitting complaints within the workplace. Local IRW Office/Field staff will need to refer to their local Grievance Policies/Procedures.
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Implementing Partners

Who is not covered by this policy?

It must be noted here that IRW cannot accept legal responsibility or promise remedial action for failures within those of its partner offices that are separate legal entities or Country Offices who have an independent Governance Structure, nor can we guarantee resolution of disputes or contractual disagreements for the same reason.

If we receive a complaint that does not relate to IRW, we will do our best to support the complainant in identifying alternative sources of support with their complaint wherever possible.

Process

How Complaints should be submitted

- By email to: complaints@irworldwide.org
- Via the website through the contacts function – [Complaints and Concerns](#) tab
- In writing to: Complaints, Office of the General Counsel, Islamic Relief Worldwide, 19 Rea Street South, Digbeth B5 6LB
- In person: (To arrange please call 0121 605 5555)

Complainants wishing to make a complaint in person should contact the Complaints Administrator via telephone where a time and date can be arranged with an appointed person to take down the details of the complaint.

Complainants contacting IRW by phone should be informed of the IRW Complaints Policy and requested to submit their complaint in one of the above ways or in person through a staff member. The complainant should also be provided with a copy of the Complaints Policy.

All complaints should be sent directly to the above email address and not to any other IRW individuals including the Chief Executive Officer, Board of Trustees and Board of Directors. Any complaints received through these channels will be redirected to IRW Complaints upon receipt.

Complaints may also be received indirectly via other mediums such as social media or in the course of dealing with other matters, individuals may voice dissatisfaction. Our staff monitoring social media accounts have a responsibility to identify complaints and support the complainant in exercising their right to complain through the appropriate channel and notify IRW Complaints of such posts.

Any complaints identified or received directly by individuals or internal departments must be forwarded to complaints@irworldwide.org including employment related concerns for recording purposes (personal details removed). The email received should then be deleted.

Filing a Complaint

Any complaint received is referred to the Office of the General Counsel which processes complaints.

The information required should ideally include:

- Complainants name, address, telephone number and email address
- Preferred method of contact
- Relationship of the complainant to Islamic Relief; for example, beneficiary, stakeholder.
- The facts of the complaint to include dates, times and location(s), where possible, using the complainants' own words
- Any evidence that may be available in support of their complaint
-

The complainant does have the right to remain anonymous

Valid complaints must be related to:

- IR activities, even if they were sub-contracted to another organisation or company;
- IR staff members/volunteers, including those who may no longer working for IR.

Complaints about IR staff members will only be dealt with under this policy if the complaints concern staff who are carrying out their working duties or are doing something very closely connected to their work. IR will not be responsible for conduct or behaviour by its staff outside of their working duties, for example in the course of their private lives, or in employment outside of IR. Staff on overseas missions may be representing IR outside of normal working hours.

IR is not an investigative authority. Where a safeguarding allegation or complaint is made in respect of an IR employee that relates to activity outside of their IR working duties and responsibilities but does raise a concern in respect of that employee which is relevant to their role/duties, then IR will consider taking appropriate action and making appropriate referrals to relevant social or law enforcement agencies as may be necessary.

Malicious Complaints

Any complaints received that are proven to be maliciously motivated will be dealt with in accordance with our internal processes or reported to any relevant external third party or authority as deemed appropriate.

- Once a complaint is received, IRW will acknowledge receipt of the complaint with an automated response
- Within 7 working days, we will provide a formal written response acknowledging receipt
- Further evidence may be requested from the complainant. We will attempt contact on 3 separate occasions. If no response is received within one month of the initial request, the complaint will be closed.
- IRW Complaints will liaise with relevant internal stakeholders to ascertain facts and possible resolutions to complaints.
- A majority of complaints can be dealt with swiftly, and a final response is usually received within 30 working days. However, where a complaint requires a formal investigation this process may take longer. If we are unable to resolve the matter within 30 working days or a formal investigation is launched, we will update the complainant and explain the reason for the delay. Where possible, we will provide an indication of when we expect to be able to provide the complainant with a final response. This is entirely dependent on the nature and complexity of the complaint. Furthermore, any anticipated timelines provided to the complainant are an estimate and not guaranteed.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be treated confidentially and handled as such throughout all stages of the complaints handling system. This means that information relating to the complaint will be stored in a secure manner for as long as required in accordance with our Data Retention Policy and will only be disclosed to other IRW staff if *strictly* required to affect a resolution to the complaint.

There are some circumstances where it may be necessary to disclose information to a third party. For example, we may have a legal obligation to share information with a relevant body if the matter involves the commission of a criminal offence, safeguarding concern or acts of terrorism.

We will only share information containing personal data to a third party if we have a legal basis to do so as defined by the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). In some cases, this will mean

that we will have to obtain the informed consent of the complainant before sharing their personal data with a third party.

For further guidance please refer to the [Data Protection Policy](#).

Whistleblowing

In addition to our complaints policy we also have a [Whistleblowing Policy](#). The aim of this policy is to set out the arrangements to enable whistle-blowers to make disclosures in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The Act gives legal protection to workers who disclose certain serious concerns which qualify as being in the public interest giving rise to a genuine concern about the wellbeing and safety of at least one individual. The organisation has put in place this Whistleblowing Policy to ensure that all staff feel able to raise concerns confidentially and even anonymously if they are a matter of public interest. Whistleblowing should be reserved for very serious concerns as outlined in the policy (i.e., Safeguarding, Fraud, Bribery and Corruption, Modern Slavery or serious maladministration within the organisation). Issues that fall within the definition of complaints should not be channelled through the whistleblowing route.

We also have the [Safecall](#) facility, an external third-party reporting mechanism that allows for the anonymous reporting of whistleblowing concerns with access to interpreters and toll-free numbers in the majority of the counties we serve. This service can be accessed via Telephone or Internet.

For further details please refer to the Whistleblowing Policy.

Appeal

IRW's complaints procedures have in-built oversight and assurance mechanisms to ensure each complaint is properly managed and investigated. In each case, the determination of the complaint is overseen by IRW's Complaints Team who are not responsible for the investigation.

If after receiving the outcome of your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with the way your complaint has been handled and believe IRW has not followed the process set out in this Policy, you can appeal to IRW's General Counsel explaining why you are appealing the original decision. This must be submitted within 10 days of the outcome of the complaint being communicated.

Appeals should be submitted to Complaints@irworldwide.org and clearly marked "Appeal"

An appeal will only be accepted on the following grounds and the person appealing the decision will be required to state in their appeal which of these applies and provide the necessary details:

- IRW has failed to follow this policy or procedures and this failure has had a detrimental impact on the complainant
- The decision was not reasonable in the circumstances based on the “band or range of reasonable responses”
- The sanction imposed was disproportionate
- New and significant information or evidence not used to reach the original decision can be provided

In each case, the General Counsel will assess the grounds for appeal within 21 days of receipt of the appeal and take appropriate action:

The reviewer will decide and communicate

- No improvements to the complaints handling
- Improvements to the complaints handling
- Complaints handling involves an error or further enquiries are required where the outcome could be impacted
- Investigation may be required

If after exhausting the appeals process, we have identified our external regulators (below) who provide guidance and support in respect of overseeing the way we work.

External Support in resolving complaints

Wherever possible IRW welcomes the opportunity to resolve complaints internally in the first instance through the process referenced. However, if you are unhappy with how we have dealt with your request, please note the support provided by the following external bodies:

If you have a complaint about fundraising, the Fundraising Regulator can help. As the regulatory body of fundraising in the UK, they can investigate potential breaches of the standards outlined in the [Fundraising Code](#)

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk>

If you have a complaint about advertising the Advertising Standards Authority can help. As the regulatory body for fundraising, they can investigate advertising campaigns that you may feel are inaccurate, offensive or deceptive or the way that the charity communicates with you.

<http://www.asa.org.uk>

The CHS Alliance accepts complaints against its member organisations who fail to apply their own commitments and/or the principles and commitments of the [Core Humanitarian Standard](#).

complaints@chsalliance.org

Information Commissioners Office (ICO)

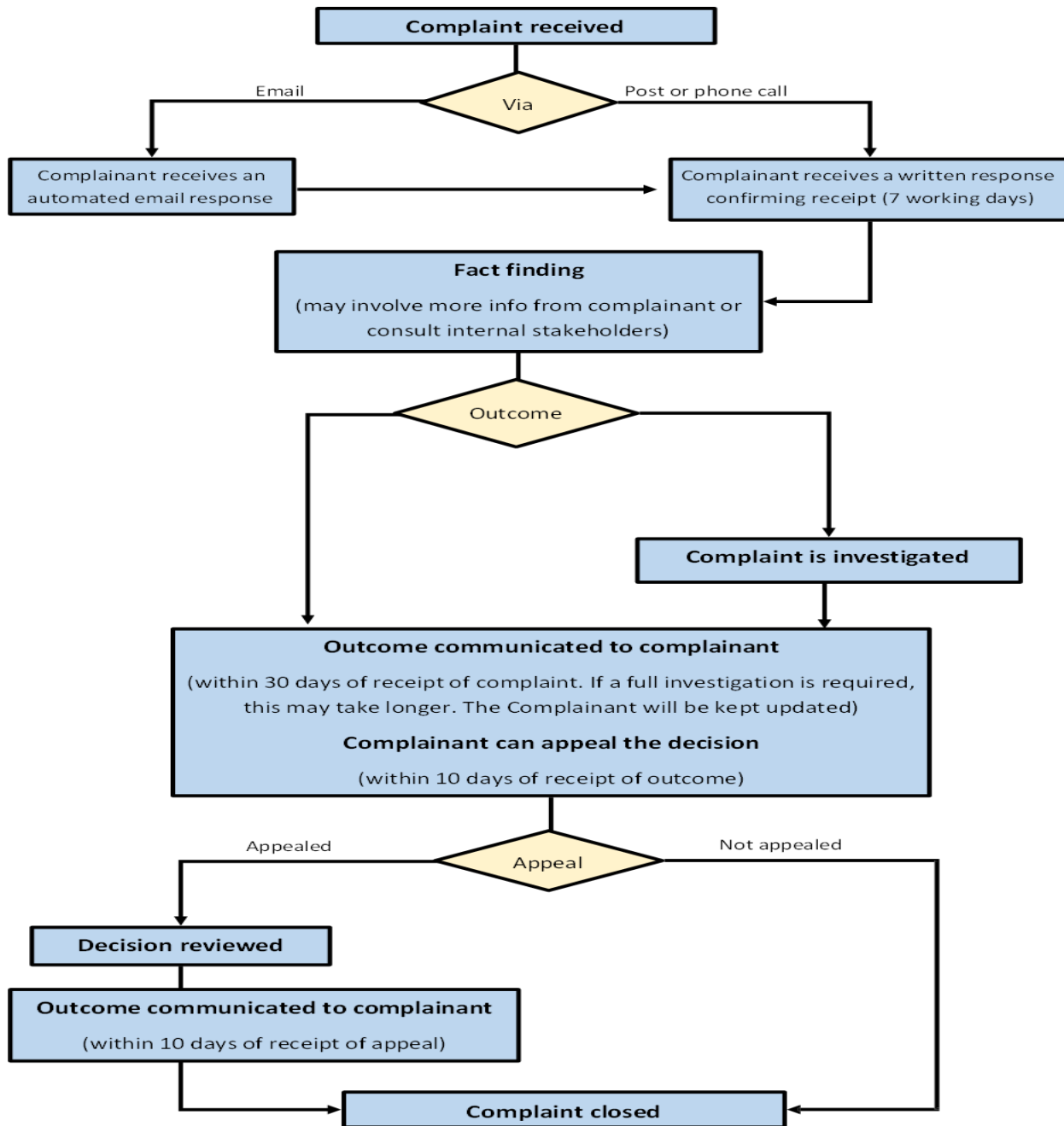
The ICO is a UK based independent authority that regulates various legislation governing information rights including the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR). If you have concerns about an organisation's information rights practices, the ICO can help.

<https://ico.org.uk>

For any other serious concerns please contact the Charity Commission

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

Appendix 1: Process Map



If the Complainant is unhappy with how IRW has dealt with their Complaint, they can refer to one of the external bodies listed in the Complaints Policy.

