

Complaints Policy GSB AA GB (registered charity number 226745)

Version: May 2022

1. Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 This complaints policy is relevant to the handling of complaints relating to the charity, the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited (GSB) only.
- 1.2 As the AA Fellowship is made up of AA members supporting each other through self-regulating groups which are autonomous from the GSB, this policy is not relevant to issues arising within the AA Fellowship. Complaints relating to such matters must be dealt with separately by the relevant AA Group, Intergroup or region in the usual way.
- 1.3 This policy is relevant to GSB Trustees and sub-committee members, staff of the GSB (when their complaint is unrelated to their employment; complaints raised by members of staff in relation to their employment are dealt with under the Grievance Policy), and volunteers operating the online response and Chat Now services on behalf of the GSB.
- 1.4 The GSB aims to treat all complaints with courtesy and fairness and to deal with them promptly. Information about the complaint will only be shared where necessary for the investigation and resolution of the complaint.
- 1.5 Please note the existence of a separate GSB Whistleblowing Policy.

2. Handing of Complaints

- 2.1 A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction about an action (or lack of action) by a person acting on behalf of the GSB, or about the policies and procedures of the GSB. It may or may not be justified.
- 2.2 All complaints must be raised **within 3 months** of the incident occurring unless there are exceptional circumstances
- 2.3 There is no restriction on who can bring a complaint against the GSB. However, in some cases we may receive a number of inter-related complaints, or a number of people may make the same complaint. In those circumstances, we may decide to consolidate the investigation into the complaints or deal with the earliest complaint first. The approach will depend on the nature of the complaints and the timing and receipt of the complaints.
- 2.4 Complaints received in person or by telephone by employees or volunteers should be handled as follows:
 - 2.4.1 Refer to this complaints policy and offer to send a copy by e-mail or post.

- 2.4.2 Inform the complainant that, in line with this complaints policy, they should attempt to resolve the complaint with the person responsible for the issue being complained about, who should be willing to listen, discuss the matter, and seek to satisfy any justified concerns.
- 2.4.3 If it is determined that the complainant has already tried resolving the complaint informally and now wishes to take the matter further, the complainant should be asked to submit a written account by letter or e-mail to the General Secretary of the GSB. The written account should include: (i) the complainant's name, address and telephone number, (ii) any relationship of the complainant to the GSB, and (iii) brief facts about the complaint and any informal action taken to date.

3. Complaints – Formal Stage

- 3.1 Any complaint that cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally will be passed on to the General Secretary of the GSB or the GSB's Executive Committee, as appropriate, who can be contacted at 10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ (email: GeneralSecretary@gsogb.org.uk)
- 3.2 The fact that the complaint has been classed as a formal complaint should be acknowledged as soon as possible but within three calendar weeks. The acknowledgement should confirm who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this Complaints Policy should be attached.
- 3.3 A suitable Trustee should be appointed to lead the investigation into the facts of the case by reviewing the paperwork and speaking to anyone who may have been involved with both the incident and with dealing with the complaint. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given an opportunity to respond. Further information may be requested of the complainant. If relevant, the person who dealt with the original complaint at the informal stage should be updated with any progress. A log must be kept.
- 3.4 Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within 28 days of acknowledgement. A progress report containing an indication of when a full reply can be expected should be sent if, for example, the investigation cannot be fully completed in the time limit.
- 3.5 Irrespective of whether the complaint is considered justified or not, the reply to the complainant should outline the investigation process, the decision reached and confirmation of whether any action has been taken. Depending on the circumstances, the reply may not contain details of action taken (e.g. where disciplinary action is taken).
- 3.6 Occasionally people will take positions where the matter cannot be resolved. However, the complaints process shall remain fair and respect all those involved.

- 3.7 The decision at this stage is final, unless the Trustees decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance to resolve the issue.
- 3.8 There is no right for complainants to appeal against the outcome of an investigation. However, if new evidence comes to light that has not previously been submitted that should be provided to the investigator who will determine whether further investigation is necessary.
- 3.9 If the investigator concludes that a complaint has been made vexatiously or in bad faith, the GSB reserves the right to take appropriate action.
- 3.10 The complainant always retains the right to write to the Chair of the GSB with any outstanding concerns.

4. Occasions when the GSB may choose not to respond

- 4.1 When the complaint is unconnected to the GSB or it is a matter which should be dealt with within the AA Fellowship structure the GSB may respond for the purpose only of informing the complainant of that fact.
- 4.2 When someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that the GSB has previously responded to.
- 4.3 When a complainant is making vexatious or persistent complaints.
- 4.4 When a complaint has clearly been sent to us and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email. In this instance the GSB can choose whether it is necessary to reply or not.
- 4.5 When a complainant is being abusive, offensive or is harassing a member of staff of the GSB or a GSB volunteer.

5. Variation on the complaints procedure

- 5.1 The Board of Trustees of the GSB acting reasonably may from time to time vary the process outlined above.

6. Data protection

- 6.1 The GSB will process any personal data collected in accordance with the data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the individual makes the report is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only with the purposes of dealing with the disclosure.

Approval

This policy was approved by the General Service Board of Trustees on: 14th May 2022

The next review is due by: May 2024