

Version No.: 1.0

Effective From: Feb 2022

Review Date: Feb 2023

Signature:	Signed by:	Position:	Date:
	Sheila Rowley	Trustee	Feb 2022

1 Policy statement

Wansbeck Valley Food Bank (WVFB) is committed to working in an open and accountable way that secures the Charity and respect of stakeholders, and as such recognises the role of an effective complaints policy in fostering transparency, fairness, and a culture of continuous improvement.

2 Organisational Responsibility

The Trustees have overall responsibility for ensuring the Foodbank follows the following procedures set out for handling complaints

3 Scope

This policy covers the handling of complaints received from Foodbank clients, volunteers, members of the public or other agencies, it does not cover the raising of issues and/or complaints from Foodbank employees, which is covered in the Grievances Policy.

4 WVFB's Approach to Handling Complaints

The Charity undertakes to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as straightforward as possible.
- Complaints are dealt with promptly, courteously, and discreetly – confidentially when appropriate.
- WVFB will respond decisively with an explanation, an apology where we have been at fault, or information on the outcome.
- WVFB will learn from complaints and use them to make improvements in the way WVFB work.
- WVFB anticipate that the majority of complaints can be dealt with informally, but in cases in which a formal procedure is more appropriate, WVFB request that the following complaints procedure is followed.

5 Complaints Procedure

WVFB request that complaints are submitted in the following format:

- In writing, addressed FAO the Chairman at the Wansbeck Valley Food Bank, Northgate Hospital, Morpeth NE61 3BP or by email to wansbeckvalleyfoodbank@gmail.com with 'complaint' in the subject line.
- The complainant should include a full explanation of what occurred, when and where the occurrence took place, how it occurred, and the effect on the person(s) involved, any witness details and copies of any witness statements together with a description of what the complainant thinks WVFB should do to put things right.

WVFB will deal with the complaint as follows:

1. WVFB will acknowledge the complainant within five working days of receipt and provide the complainant with the name and contact details of the person responsible for investigating the matter.
2. The person responsible for the investigation will respond in writing with their findings and proposed resolution within twenty-eight days from receipt of the complaint*.
3. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation they may appeal: letters must be received within twenty-one working days of the date on the correspondence notifying the complainant of the outcome of the first investigation.
4. The complaint will be reinvestigated. The Chairman will determine who will consider this as long as that person was not part of the original investigation. The complainant will be informed of the outcome within 10 working days*.

* unless the complaint is particularly complex or time-consuming, in which case the complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and notified of the expected date of completion

6 Other information

Complaints about staff behaviour or attitude will be handled by the line manager of the staff member in question, and in accordance with the Charity's Disciplinary Procedure if appropriate.

The complainant will not be given details of the action WVFB have taken, as such information is confidential.

If the complaint is an operational matter and not involving the Operations Trustee then that is where the final decision will rest. If the complaint relates to the Operations Trustee then responsibility for overseeing the process and related outcome will pass to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

7 Anonymous Complaints

If a complainant wishes to make a complaint anonymously or does not provide contact details, we will investigate but will be unable to advise the complainant of the outcome of the investigation.

8 Abusive Complaints

If a complaint contains abusive or offensive language, then WVFB reserve the right not to respond. WVFB reserve the right to report any such communication to the Police.

9 Data Privacy Statement

WVFB collate and analyse data about complaints so that we can improve the services we provide. WVFB will collect personal information including the complainant’s name and contact details, including postal address, telephone number, email address and social media contact information, to be able to communicate with them about their complaint. WVFB will also collect sufficient information about the situation concerned to be able to understand what has happened. WVFB may need to request further information depending on the nature of the complaint. WVFB have a legitimate interest in holding this information to be able to monitor and improve our services.

Information gathered is accessed by WVFB employees and may be shared with advice agencies or professional services firms only if appropriate, for example if the complaint relates to safeguarding and WVFB seek guidance as to next steps. Where a complaint involves third party agencies in our network, WVFB may need to share this information with them to understand what has happened and determine a resolution. WVFB keep this information for two years after the complaint has been closed, unless there is a requirement to keep it longer, in which case WVFB will inform the complainant of this. After this time, the data will be aggregated and anonymised.

10 Equality and Diversity

WVFB is committed to ensuring that it treats its clients, employees and volunteers fairly equitably and reasonably and that it does not discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of their ethnic origin, physical or mental abilities, gender, age, religious beliefs or sexual orientation. This policy has been appropriately assessed

11. Monitoring and Compliance

WVFB will maintain effective monitoring systems to ensure implementation of this policy including the following:

Standard process/issue	Monitoring and audit			
	Method	By	Reporting to	Frequency
Report of any complaints received, and resolutions achieved (where appropriate)	Report	Chairman	Trustees	Next Board of Trustees meeting following completion of investigation.
Audit of complaints received, changes made, lessons learned, and any recurring themes or issues identified in the preceding 12 months.	Audit	Chairman	Trustees	Annually