

## Complaints Policy

VoiceAbility is committed to providing the highest possible standards of service from all who represent the organisation and we want to ensure that our actions in addressing complaints is in line with our values because we are:

**Passionate** - dedicated to strengthening voices, supporting rights and changing lives

**Empowering** - enabling people to live life to the full

**Resourceful** - proactive and finding effective ways to make things better

**Collaborative** - valuing partnerships and making collaborative working a positive experience

**Honest** - working with integrity and sticking to our principles

### Policy statement

VoiceAbility is committed to delivering professional, effective, and high-quality services to everyone we work with. Feedback from those we work with, on our services and on the performance of our staff and volunteers, is essential in helping us to improve both what we do, and how we do it.

Complaints are an important form of feedback. It is important to understand how we respond to this feedback to change and improve our services.

We are committed to continually reviewing and improving the way in which we handle, resolve, learn from and improve our management of complaints, including reviewing the timeliness of responses and resolutions.

### Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Informal resolution</b>	The process of dealing with expressions of concern or dissatisfaction where the person raising them does not wish to raise a complaint and is agreeable to discussing the issue/s with the staff member, who will try to put things right or resolve the problem. If the staff member is unable to resolve matters, they may pass them on to their line manager for informal resolution.

**Name of document:** Complaints and Compliments Policy **Version:**3 **Policy owner:** Director of Practice

**Effective date:** July 2022 **Review date:** July 2025

For questions about the content or format of this document contact: [feedback@voiceability.org](mailto:feedback@voiceability.org)

<b>Complaint</b>	A complaint is where the person raising the complaint wishes the issue to be investigated in a full investigation by an appointed Complaint Manager.
<b>Complaint Manager</b>	The manager appointed to investigate the complaint.
<b>Appeal Officer</b>	This will usually be someone senior to the person who undertook the original complaint investigation, chosen by Director of Operations or Senior Management Team (SMT) member.

## Scope

This policy applies to everyone working on behalf of VoiceAbility. This includes employees, agency workers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, social work students and trustees.

This policy sets out our commitment to gathering, recording and learning from the complaints we receive, and the expectation we have of everyone working on behalf of VoiceAbility in helping us realise that commitment.

It covers all complaints about VoiceAbility received by VoiceAbility about any subject and in any form.

VoiceAbility reserves the right not to investigate complaints about matters outside of VoiceAbility's remit, and not to reinvestigate complaints that have already been fully investigated under this Policy.

VoiceAbility will not investigate complaints that are over 2 years old without a clear rationale for why the complaint could not be brought earlier.

VoiceAbility reserves the right to make the decision as to which manager is most appropriate to investigate a complaint.

Any unreasonable complaint behaviour by a complainant may be managed under VoiceAbility's Managing Inappropriate Behaviour Guidance.

Complaints can be made by anyone that has used VoiceAbility services or who is affected by the organisation and its decisions. It also applies to people who have been refused a service by VoiceAbility.

Allegations of abuse by anyone working on behalf of VoiceAbility or by the organisation will be responded to under our relevant safeguarding policies as a first priority. This does not necessarily preclude action under this policy.

## Duties and Responsibilities

---

**Name of document:** Complaints Policy **Version:**3 **Policy owner:** Director of Practice  
**Effective date:** January 2022 **Review date:** Jan 2025  
For questions about the content or format of this document contact: [feedback@voiceability.org](mailto:feedback@voiceability.org)

Role	Responsibility
<b>All staff</b>	Upon receipt of negative feedback from someone external to VoiceAbility, deal with their concerns according to this Policy and the Complaint Process
<b>Volunteers</b>	Informing their supervisor if they receive any negative feedback/complaints
<b>Practice Lead</b>	Provide Complaint feedback to the Board, Senior Management Team (SMT) and other managers as required
<b>Complaints Team (comprising PA to CEO and Practice Management staff)</b>	Monitor the Outlook external feedback email inbox ( <a href="mailto:feedback@voiceability.org">feedback@voiceability.org</a> ) and allocate new complaints to the relevant manager
<b>Complaint Manager</b>	On receiving a complaint, process the complaint according to this Policy and the Complaint Process  If the complainant appeals, forward the complaint to the nominated Appeal Officer
<b>Appeal Officer</b>	On receiving a complaint appeal, to conduct a review of the initial complaint according to this Policy and the Complaint Process

## Dealing with Complaints

It is important that where people do have a complaint about our work, we respond and deal with these issues swiftly, thoroughly and fairly. Our complaints policy will be available on our website.

If anyone wishes to complain about our services, they may do so in any way, and to know that we will take notice of their views and concerns and respond appropriately. Sources of complaints include:

- Directly from the client either in person or by telephone, email or letter
- A third party informing a staff member/volunteer of an issue in person, by telephone, email or letter

---

**Name of document:** Complaints Policy **Version:**3 **Policy owner:** Director of Practice  
**Effective date:** January 2022 **Review date:** Jan 2025  
For questions about the content or format of this document contact: [feedback@voiceability.org](mailto:feedback@voiceability.org)

- Via the VoiceAbility feedback email address ([feedback@voiceability.org](mailto:feedback@voiceability.org)) which is monitored by the PA to the CEO or the Practice Management Team

Any personal information obtained in relation to a complaint is only to be used for that purpose. When people complain to VoiceAbility our aim is to:

- Clearly understand the person's concerns and the issues they are raising
- Clearly understand the resolution sought
- Address the concerns by understanding the facts of the situation, and identify a resolution as quickly as possible and as close to the root of the problem as possible
- Resolve issues informally wherever the person wishes us to, and wherever appropriate
- Investigate Complaints thoroughly and fairly

We will investigate complaints objectively, fairly and thoroughly in a positive problem- solving manner and in line with our complaints timetable details in the Complaints Process.

All staff/volunteers will be made aware of complaints processes. Managers will receive coaching in investigating complaints objectively and fairly.

We will always explain our Complaints Policy when we are commencing work with anyone using our services. This includes people's right to complain and how they can do that.

On request, and wherever needed and practical, we will provide information on how to make a complaint in other languages and other formats, such as audio or braille

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Party Complaints**

It makes no difference to how we deal with a complaint whether it is raised by a complainant (someone directly affected), or a third party (someone indirectly affected). The only difference is that if a complaint is raised by a third party, we may be unable to provide any ongoing information due to confidentiality and data protection reasons.

## **Monitoring statement**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or when new guidance or legislation is written that might affect the policy, whichever is sooner.

## **Equality and Diversity Statement**

---

**Name of document:** Complaints Policy **Version:**3 **Policy owner:** Director of Practice  
**Effective date:** January 2022 **Review date:** Jan 2025  
For questions about the content or format of this document contact: [feedback@voiceability.org](mailto:feedback@voiceability.org)

VoiceAbility believes in fostering an inclusive workplace which welcomes, values and celebrates the diversity of its staff and partners, treats all on a basis of equality and encourages all to meet their maximum potential. All activities and behaviour in the workplace or associated with it should ensure that everyone is able to participate as fully as reasonably possible, and that no one is unreasonably excluded on grounds such as disability, mental health, gender/ transgender/ intersex, age, race or ethnicity, sexuality/ sexual orientation, marital/ civil partnership status, social background or any other inappropriate reason. VoiceAbility endeavours to ensure that this ethos is reflected in our practices, policies and the services provided.

## GDPR and Data Protection

VoiceAbility only keeps Complaint records of Clients for as long as it is relevant to do so. For details of retention periods for personal documents and information, please see VoiceAbility Privacy Policy.

## Amendment history

Date of change	Changed by (Initials)	Brief description of what was changed
August 2018	Jonathan Douglass	Separation of Complaints Policy from Comments, Compliments – OPS007. Includes guidance on investigating complaints, responding to complaints and reviewing complaints. Appendices added
June 2019	Rachel Roberts	Substantial rewriting. Reformatted and rebranded. Separation of complaints policy and complaints process.
May 2021	Sarah Iveson	Updated introduction, E & D and GDPR statements to reflect current Complaints process Compliments removed

---

**Name of document:** Complaints Policy **Version:**3 **Policy owner:** Director of Practice  
**Effective date:** January 2022 **Review date:** Jan 2025  
 For questions about the content or format of this document contact: [feedback@voiceability.org](mailto:feedback@voiceability.org)

July 2022	Sarah Iveson	Full review and update to policy in line with new process document
-----------	--------------	--

---

**Name of document:** Complaints Policy **Version:**3 **Policy owner:** Director of Practice  
**Effective date:** January 2022 **Review date:** Jan 2025  
For questions about the content or format of this document contact: [feedback@voiceability.org](mailto:feedback@voiceability.org)