

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 barriers to attending work are managed appropriately and 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 these complaints, and change to improve our services. It is also important that where people do have a complaint about our work, we respond and deal with these issues swiftly, thoroughly and fairly.

Our aim is that if anyone wishes to complain, they may do so in any way, and to know that we will take notice of their views and concerns and respond appropriately. We will record all complaints.

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 complainant wishes us to, and wherever appropriate, so that people who have concerns do not have to go through a formal process
- Investigate formal 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.

Staff will follow best practice in complaints handling as championed by the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman. For further information, please see the PHSO's Principles of Good Complaint Handling:

<https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/about-us/our-principles/principles-good-complaint-handling>

Complaints will be based around the 6 key principles highlighted by the PHSO. These are:

- Getting it right
- Being customer focussed
- Being open and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Seeking continuous improvement

Managers will receive training and 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.

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.

Scope

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 also explains how we promise to deal with complaints that people have about the work we do, and the services we provide.

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

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For questions about the content or format of this document contact: feedback@voiceability.org

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.

Any unreasonable complaint behaviour may be managed under VoiceAbility's Managing Inappropriate Behaviour Policy.

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

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 (OPS001 - Safeguarding Adults and OPS002 – Safeguarding Children & Young People) as a first priority. This does not necessarily preclude action under this policy.

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

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.

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GDPR and Data Protection

VoiceAbility only keeps records of individuals and their applications 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.
January 2022	Sarah Iveson	Updated email contact in footer

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