



Bridging the Gap (Manchester)

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Registered Charity Number: 1170952

This policy and guidance will be reviewed every 18 months or earlier if there are any changes in related legislation or when a complaint suggests we need to revise working practices or procedures. This will ensure that this document is current and fit for purpose.

Date reviewed: 24th January 2025
Reviewed by: Michelle McHale & Lynda Mason
Next review due: 24th June 2026

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1. Policy

Bridging the Gap (BTG) aims to promote an environment where people are encouraged to raise and discuss issues informally and, where necessary, seek solutions to prevent such issues developing into problems or formal complaints. However, we recognise that there may be situations where people are not happy with the outcome of an informal discussion or feel that the issue needs to be taken further.

BTG views complaints however, as an opportunity to learn and improve its service in the future, as well as a chance to put things right as quickly as possible for the person that has made the complaint.

Bridging the Gap's policy is: -

- to take all feedback and complaints seriously and to respond to them in a timely manner
- to provide a fair complaints procedure, which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- to publicise the existence of the complaints procedure so that people know how to contact BTG to make a complaint
- to make sure everyone at BTG knows what to do if a complaint is received
- to make sure all complaints are investigated fairly
- to make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- to gather information, which helps BTG to make improvements.

2. Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of BTG, its services, staff or volunteers.

3. Where complaints come from

- Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in BTG, for example, people who use our food bank, referral agencies, volunteers and anyone else BTG comes into contact with in the course of our work
- A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by text, by email or in writing.

4. Confidentiality & Data Privacy

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, informing only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

There may, however, be occasions when BTG cannot provide absolute confidentiality, for example in circumstances where a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm.

Bridging the Gap (Manchester) is registered as a data controller with the UK Information Commissioner's Office under registration number ZA294550.

We use the personal information that a complainant provides in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 to process their complaint. BTG has a legitimate interest in holding this information in order to be able to monitor and improve our services.

BTG will collect personal information including the complainant's name and contact details, including postal address, telephone number, email address and social media contact information, in order to be able to investigate the complaint and to communicate with the complainant about it.

BTG will also collect sufficient information about the situation that the complainant is contacting us about in order to understand what has happened and to help them seek a resolution to their complaint.

Where a complaint relates to services involving our partners, for example a referral agency or Trussell, then BTG may need to share the complainant's information with a third party.

BTG will keep this information for three years after a complaint has been closed, unless we have a requirement to keep it longer, in which case we will inform the complainant of this. After this time the data will be aggregated and anonymised.

For further information about how BTG uses personal information a complainant may ask for a copy of our 'Privacy Policy' or may look at our website: -

<https://manchestersouthcentral.foodbank.org.uk/about/governance-policies/>

5. Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees.

6. Monitoring of Complaints

As part of the monitoring role of BTG's Trustee, all complaints will be reported to the next meeting of the Board at which Trustees may recommend improvements to any of BTG's procedures.

7. Complaints procedure

Written complaints may be sent to BTG by email to:-

projectmanager@manchestersouthcentral.foodbank.org.uk

Or put in writing to: -

Project Manager or Board of Trustees
Bridging the Gap
The Wesley Centre
Unit 10
Old York Street
Hulme
Manchester
M15 5BP

Verbal complaints can be directed to the Safeguarding Officer or to one of the Project Managers in person or by contacting them on telephone number 0161 226 3413.

The person making the complaint must tell us what their complaint or feedback is about and what they would like to see happen as a result. They will also need to tell us how we can best contact them.

8. Receiving complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities that the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person must be recorded in the 'Complaints Log' kept in the main office at the Wesley Centre. The person who receives a telephone call or an in-person complaint should: -

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to BTG (eg. service user/guest, volunteer, member of public)
- Inform the complainant that BTG has a complaints procedure

- Inform the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

9. Resolving complaints

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so, if possible and it is appropriate to do so. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information must be passed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees within five working days.

On receiving the complaint, the Chair will record it in the 'Complaints Log'. If it has not already been resolved, s/he will delegate to an appropriate person to investigate and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints must be acknowledged in writing within five working days of receipt by the person handling the complaint. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached to the acknowledgement.

Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report must be sent to the complainant with an indication of when they can expect a full reply to be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the full reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at stage one, then they can request that the complaint is reviewed. Letters requesting that a complaint is escalated must be received within twenty one working days of the date on the correspondence sent to the complainant notifying them of the outcome of the first investigation.

At the second stage, the complaint will be passed directly to the Chair of Trustees. The request for a higher level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement must say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chair of Trustees may investigate the facts of the case providing they were not the investigating officer at stage one. Alternatively, the case may be delegated to a member of the Trustee Board for a review of decisions made. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint previously.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report must be sent to the complainant with an indication of when they can expect a full reply to be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board of Trustees decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.