



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: 21/07/2026
Reviewed by: Michelle McHale
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1. Policy

Bridging the Gap (BTG) aims to promote an environment where everyone—service users, volunteers, staff, partners, and members of the public—is encouraged to raise and discuss issues informally and, where necessary, seek solutions to prevent such issues developing into problems or formal complaints.

BTG views complaints as opportunities to learn and improve its services, as well as chances to put things right quickly and fairly for the person who has made the complaint.

BTG's policy is to:

- take all feedback and complaints seriously and respond in a timely manner
- provide a fair, accessible complaints procedure that is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- ensure the procedure is available in alternative formats and that reasonable adjustments are made for accessibility, in line with the Equality Act 2010
- publicise the existence of the complaints procedure so that people know how to contact BTG
- make sure everyone at BTG knows what to do if a complaint is received
- ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and without bias
- make sure complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and relationships repaired
- gather information that helps BTG to make improvements
- ensure that no person is treated unfairly or disadvantaged for raising a complaint (non-retaliation commitment)

2. Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Bridging the Gap (BTG), its services, staff, volunteers, or partners.

Complaints may relate to:

- failure to follow BTG's policies or procedures
- conduct or behaviour of staff, volunteers, or trustees
- quality, accessibility, or delivery of services
- decisions made by BTG or its representatives
- actions or omissions by partner organisations or third-party delivery agencies (including referral agencies and Trussell Trust partners)

BTG recognises that complaints can arise from anyone who has a legitimate interest in our work, including service users, volunteers, partner agencies, and members of the public. All complaints will be treated seriously, fairly, and with respect.

3. Where complaints come from

Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in Bridging the Gap (BTG), including people who use our services, referral agencies, volunteers, partners, and members of the public.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by text, by email, or in writing. BTG will ensure that all routes to complain are accessible and that reasonable adjustments are made for anyone who requires support to communicate their concern.

BTG will also accept complaints submitted:

- Anonymously, recognising that while investigation may be limited, such feedback can still provide valuable learning.
- Through an advocate or representative, where a complainant wishes or needs someone to act on their behalf. BTG will confirm consent before proceeding with the investigation.

All complaints will be treated seriously, fairly, and with respect, regardless of how they are received or who submits them.

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.

BTG processes personal information provided by complainants in accordance with the **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

- The lawful basis for processing is **Article 6(1)(f)** – legitimate interests, enabling BTG to investigate and respond to complaints.
- Where special category data is processed (for example, health or safeguarding information), BTG relies on **Article 9(2)(d)** – processing by a not-for-profit body in the course of its legitimate activities.

BTG collects personal information such as name, contact details, and relevant details about the complaint to enable investigation and communication.

Personal data is stored securely using encrypted systems and restricted access controls.

Complainants have rights under UK GDPR, including:

- access to their personal data
- rectification of inaccurate information
- erasure or restriction of processing where applicable

BTG will retain complaint records for **three years** after closure unless a longer retention period is required by law or safeguarding obligations. After this time, data will be aggregated and anonymised.

Responsibility for data protection compliance within BTG lies with the **Trustee Safeguarding Lead**, who acts as the organisation's Data Protection Officer.

For further information, complainants may request a copy of BTG's **Privacy Policy** or visit:

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

5. Responsibility

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

Operational responsibility for managing complaints rests with the **Project Manager**, supported by the **Trustee Safeguarding Lead**, who ensures that investigations are conducted fairly, consistently, and in line with BTG's safeguarding and data protection policies.

Complaints will be investigated by a designated staff member or trustee who is **not directly involved in the matter** being complained about, to avoid any conflict of interest.

The **Project Manager** will oversee the investigation process and prepare a written summary of findings and recommendations.

The **Chair of Trustees** will review and sign off the outcome of formal complaints and any proposed actions for improvement.

Where a complaint involves safeguarding or data protection concerns, the **Trustee Safeguarding Lead** will ensure that appropriate procedures are followed and that relevant statutory agencies are informed if required.

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.

in addition, BTG will produce a **quarterly and annual aggregated report** summarising:

- the number and type of complaints received
- outcomes and resolutions achieved
- any emerging trends or recurring issues
- actions taken to improve practice or service delivery

All data presented to the Board will be **anonymised** to protect confidentiality.

The Board will review these reports to identify learning, ensure accountability, and confirm that appropriate follow-up actions have been implemented.

The **Project Manager** will maintain a secure complaints log and coordinate with the **Trustee Safeguarding Lead** to ensure that learning points are captured and integrated into staff training and policy reviews.

7. Complaints procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

BTG encourages concerns to be raised informally with the relevant staff member or volunteer wherever possible. Many issues can be resolved quickly through discussion and clarification. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or the complainant prefers a formal process, the complaint will proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

Formal complaints may be submitted by email to

projectmanager@manchestersouthcentral.foodbank.org.uk or in writing to:
Project Manager or Board of Trustees

Bridging the Gap, The Wesley Centre, Unit 10, Old York Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5BP

BTG will:

- **Acknowledge** receipt of the complaint within **5 working days**.
- **Investigate** the complaint within **20 working days**, or notify the complainant if more time is required.
- Assign an **independent investigator** not involved in the matter to ensure fairness and avoid conflicts of interest.
- Conduct fact-finding through review of documents, interviews, and evidence as appropriate.
- Maintain a secure record of all correspondence and findings in the complaints log, accessible only to authorised staff and trustees.

The complainant will receive a **written response** outlining the findings, decisions, and any actions taken to resolve the issue.

8. Receiving Complaints

BTG will accept complaints through any accessible channel—verbally, by phone, text, email, or in writing.

Support will be provided for vulnerable complainants, including advocacy, translation, or alternative communication formats, to ensure accessibility and fairness throughout the process.

Where a complaint involves allegations or concerns about harm, abuse, or risk to a child or vulnerable adult, BTG's **Safeguarding Policy and Procedures** will take precedence. Such complaints will be referred immediately to the **Trustee Safeguarding Lead** and, where appropriate, to statutory agencies.

9. Resolving complaints

Stage 3 – Escalation and Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal in writing to the **Chair of Trustees** within **10 working days** of receiving the decision.

The Chair will review the investigation and may appoint another trustee to conduct an independent review.

A final written response will be issued within **20 working days** of the appeal being received.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after BTG's internal process, they may escalate concerns to an **external body**, such as:

- The **Trussell Trust**, if the complaint relates to foodbank partnership matters.
- The **Charity Commission**, if the complaint involves serious governance, safeguarding, or misuse of charitable funds.

Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

BTG is committed to treating all complainants with respect. However, where a complaint is found to be unreasonable, persistent, or vexatious—such as repeated complaints without new evidence or abusive communication—BTG reserves the right to restrict or cease correspondence. Any such decision will be approved by the **Chair of Trustees** and recorded formally.

Record-Keeping and Learning

All complaint records will be stored securely for **three years** after closure and then anonymised. The **Project Manager** and **Trustee Safeguarding Lead** will review outcomes to identify learning points and feed improvements into staff training and policy reviews.