

Complaints Policy

Introduction

SIA aims to maintain high standards in all its work and activities but recognises that trustees, staff and volunteers can sometimes get things wrong, despite their best intentions. SIA views a complaint as an opportunity, as well as a chance, to put things right for the person making the complaint, and to improve the services and activities that SIA offers. We would not be able to do so or learn for the future if we did not receive feedback when things go wrong. Therefore, we value and take seriously any feedback we receive.

Generally, the purpose of this complaints policy is to resolve disputes informally without resorting to formal investigation or legal proceedings. We will try to explore every reasonable option to resolve complaints by working with the person making the complaint to agree an outcome which is satisfactory to them and SIA. Whether the complaint is justified or not, our reply to the complainant will describe the action we have taken to investigate the complaint, conclusions we have reached as a result of the investigation, and any action we have taken or are taking as a result of your complaint.

We will ensure that all information received and produced in connection with a complaint is treated as confidential and handled sensitively, that only those who need to know have access to that information, and that relevant data protection requirements are all met.

Whether or not a complaint is resolved at the first stage, all complaint information will be passed (within one week of acknowledgement of the complaint) to the Head of people and operations, who is responsible for collating details of all complaints and reporting on them to our trustees.

If a complaint results in disciplinary action being taken against a member of our staff, this will follow the staff disciplinary procedure.

Policy & Procedure

Complaint

A 'complaint' in this Procedure means any expression of dissatisfaction in relation to SIA or any of its staff, volunteers, or trustees that requires a response from SIA.

Where complaints may come from

Complaints may come from users of SIA's services, those involved in its activities, members, donors, fundraisers, supporters and any other person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in SIA.

Complaints which cannot be dealt with under this procedure

This procedure is only for external complaints by those individuals or organisations described above. It is not to be used for grievances by staff, volunteers, trustees, or others. Staff or volunteers should use SIA's grievance procedure instead.

Whilst complainants are generally entitled to receive responses to a complaint and to challenge any responses received from SIA, it will not deal with complaints or challenges where in the reasonable opinion of the CEO they amount to persistent, habitual or vexatious complaints.

SIA expects any complainant to be polite and courteous. It will not tolerate aggressive, abusive, or unreasonable behaviour or demands.

Making a complaint:

First Stage

If someone has a complaint, they can contact SIA by phone, email or letter. To help SIA investigate and address all complaints, please provide as much information as possible.

This should cover:

- The reason for/nature of the complaint
- Where and when what you are complaining about happened
- The name(s) of anyone involved (if known)
- What outcome you are hoping for (but SIA are not obliged to resolve the complaint in that way)
- Your contact details (name, address, daytime telephone number and/or email address)

Verbal complaints

A complaint can be made by telephone or by speaking in person to us in any of the following ways, during office hours.

- Call our offices on 01908 604191 and ask to speak to the relevant Manager of the particular service/activity where your complaint involves one of the people who work in that service/activity or the complaint is about any aspect of that particular service/activity.
- If your complaint is instead about a Manager, you can ask to speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- If you are not sure who to speak to, you can ask to speak to the Head of people and operations.

If when making a complaint, the person receiving the call/visit is not the appropriate person to deal with it, they will arrange for the appropriate person to contact the complainant by phone.

If the complainant does not feel that they can approach any of the above for any reason, they can make their complaint to the Chief executive officer (CEO) by calling 01908 604191.

If a complaint is about the CEO or any trustee(s), including the Chair or Vice Chair/s, on receipt of your complaint we will pass it to the person we have designated below at *“Who will investigate, deal with, and respond to you about it”*, and they will deal with it.

Complaints in writing

If you would prefer to write to us, you can send your complaint by letter addressed as follows. It would be helpful if you state near the top of the letter *“This is a complaint made under the Complaints Procedure”*:

Head of people and operations
Spinal Injuries Association
SIA House, 2 Trueman Place
Oldbrook
Milton Keynes
MK6 2HH

or by email to sia@spinal.co.uk

Whoever initially receives any complaint about any member of staff, volunteer, or trustee, it will normally be dealt with subsequently as follows:

Who the complaint is about	Who will investigate, deal with and respond
A member of non-management staff or a volunteer	Line manager
A line manager or volunteer supervisor	A member of the Senior Leadership Team
A member of the senior leadership team	CEO
CEO or a trustee	Chair of trustees
Chair of trustees	Vice chair

Timescales for all first stage complaints made by phone, in person or in writing

SIA will try to resolve the problem as quickly as possible but if we cannot do this (for example, if we need to investigate further), whoever the complainant initially contacts will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, or will arrange for it to be acknowledged, within 5 working days.

The acknowledgement will inform the complainant of when they can expect further contact, either with a proposed resolution or update. It will also inform them of the name of the staff member or trustee dealing with the complaint, who will be either the person the initial complaint was made to or another person to whom SIA has delegated the responsibility of dealing with the complaint.

After the complaint has been investigated and dealt with it the responsible person will then respond to the complainant with their definitive reply. A definitive reply should be received within 4 weeks of making the complaint. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Second stage

If, for any reason, the complainant is not happy with the resolution of the complaint under the first stage procedure, they can bring this to our attention by writing to the CEO at the address given above. They should set out clearly the details of the complaint, explaining why they were not satisfied with SIA's response under the first stage procedure and outline what they feel is needed to resolve the issue.

The CEO will send an acknowledgment within 5 working days and arrange for a suitably senior person to investigate the complaint and respond with a definitive reply within a further 10 working days (the person who investigates and responds during the second stage will generally be someone other than the person who initially did so under the first stage).

Third stage

If you are still not satisfied with our response and wish to take the complaint further, please inform the Chair of Trustees in writing within 28 days of receiving our reply under the second stage procedure to the address given under the first stage, marking your letter Private & Confidential. He/she will further investigate your complaint, together with trustees and/or other senior staff nominated. You will be contacted with their conclusions and any actions to be taken within 10 working days from the date on which we receive your letter.

Follow up

For us to make improvements, we may wish to contact you within one month of your complaint being dealt with to check that you were satisfied with our resolution. Any

information you give will only be used to make improvements to SIA and its services and/or activities.

Taking your complaint outside of the Spinal Injuries Association

The Fundraising Standards Board

If your complaint is about our fundraising work or activities and you are not satisfied with our response, you are entitled to take it to the Fundraising Standards Board. This is the self-regulatory scheme that works to ensure that organisations raising money from the public do so honestly and properly. As a member of the Fundraising Standards Board, we are committed to abiding by any decision they reach on complaints that are escalated to them. Their contact details are:

Fundraising Standards Board, 65 Brushfield Street, London E1 6AA
Tel: 0333 321 8803
Email: info@frsb.org.uk
Website: www.frsb.org.uk

Charity Commission

If your complaint is about any other aspect of our charitable work, you may wish to contact the Charity Commission. However, we suggest that, before you do so, you consider whether it is appropriate to contact the Commission rather than ourselves in the first instance. The Commission has guidance on its website as to when to direct complaints to a charity and not to the Commission. Their contact details are:

Charity Commission Direct, PO Box 1227, Liverpool L69 3UG
Tel: 0845 300 0218
Website: www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx
www.charitycommission.gov.uk/contact-us/general-enquiries/report-a-concern-about-a-charity

Other Authorities

Charity Commission guidance to the public states that:

- If you believe there is criminal activity within a charity, you should inform the Police
- If you suspect fraud connected to a charity, you should report it to Report Fraud, which is the place to tell the police about cyber crime and fraud. The Report Fraud website is at <https://www.reportfraud.police.uk/> or you can call 0300 123 2040
- If you have information about possible terrorist activity connected to a charity, you should report it to the Anti-terrorist Hotline on **0800 789 321**.

If a complaint relates to the complainant's personal data, it may be appropriate to contact the Office of the Information Commissioner. A complaint could be directed to another regulator where it properly falls under its jurisdiction or remit. For example, a complaint could be made to the Advertising Standard Authority (ASA) where appropriate.

Policy Owner (responsibility)	Director of finance, people and operations
Review schedule	Annual
Date of last review	September 2025
Date of next review	September 2026
Approval level	SLT (if significant changes)
Related policies	N/A