



The Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain Complaints Policy and Procedures

Policy Purpose

The Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- 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 our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure that complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us improve what we do.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain. This could include an administrative issue, a staff member, a process, or a service resulting from the failure to meet the individual's expectations.

An individual may make a complaint if they feel the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain has:

- Failed to provide a service or an unacceptable standard of service, made a mistake in the way the service was provided or provided an unfair service
- Failed to act in a proper way.

This policy does not cover staff complaints; staff should refer to the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain Grievance Policy.

Concern or Complaint

It is essential to distinguish between concern and complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of their developing into formal complaints.

If you have any concerns about our work, please tell a staff member or their manager as soon as possible so they can quickly understand and try to make things right.

If you are not happy with the response to your concern and/or want to make a formal complaint, please follow the procedure below.

This policy only covers complaints about the administration, staff, systems, processes or service of the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain. If your complaint concerns another organisation that works with the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain, it must be directed to them, and we can help you to do so.

This policy does not cover safeguarding concerns. Any safeguarding concerns raised will be addressed in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy. You do not have to do this; we will arrange this internally via our policy. This policy, however, does cover the event that you believe your concern was not handled satisfactorily.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, shared only with those who need to know, and in accordance with any relevant data protection requirements.

Complaints Procedure

We want to make it easy for you to contact us and to provide feedback or make a complaint. These are the ways you can get in touch with us:

1. You can call us on 020 7723 2527, and your complaint will be documented.
2. You can email us at admin@mercyunion.org.uk
3. You can write to us at our Head Office ***Mercy Union Generalate***, 11 Harewood Avenue London NW1 6LD, England

In all instances where a complaint is made using the above means, we will contact you within 2 working days of receiving it. If you provide us with a telephone number and/or email address, we will contact you by either of those means to discuss the matter further and to officially record all necessary details. Hopefully, we can resolve the matter immediately. However, if the issue is more complex and an investigation is required, we will do the following:

- The person who receives the complaint will:
 - Record full details of your complaint
 - Record the complaint in our Complaints Register
 - Note down the relationship of the complainant to the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain, e.g., Religious, Safeguarding Lead, Survivor, etc.
 - Take all necessary steps to investigate the matter
 - Contact you again within 15 working days of receiving the complaint to advise you of our findings or to give you an update on progress
 - Continue to keep you informed until the matter is resolved to your satisfaction or until all appropriate steps (in the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain's reasonable opinion) to resolve the matter have been taken
- The Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will handle all complaints.

Resolving Complaints

Our commitment to you is to address each complaint in a sensitive, fair, transparent, equitable, professional and unbiased manner, through our complaints-handling process.

We will operate at all times from the premise that any person is entitled to express their views on our services and that those views should be taken seriously and investigated when needed.

There are three stages to the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain's complaints procedure:

- Stage One – the complaint/investigation
- Stage Two – appeal
- Stage Three – External

Stage 1

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

On receiving the complaint, if not already resolved, the SLT will delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person handling the complaint should acknowledge it within five working days. The acknowledgement should state who is handling the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within 15 working days. If this is not possible, for example, because an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent to the complainant with an indication of when a full reply will be provided.

Whether the complaint is justified 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.

Stage 2

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, they can request that the complaint be reviewed at the Trustee Board level.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Trustee Board. The request for Board-level review should be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. The acknowledgement should state who will handle the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Board may investigate the facts of the case itself or delegate a suitably senior person within the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain to do so. This may involve reviewing the case paperwork and speaking with the person who handled the complaint at Stage 1. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage 1 should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible, for example, because an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be provided.

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 decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance in resolving the matter.

External Assistance

If both stages have been exhausted but a satisfactory resolution hasn't been reached, the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain may decide to seek external assistance. However, these steps will only be taken if it is appropriate to do so, for example, the complaint is of a serious nature, or there is a valid conflict of interest.

Withdrawal of the Complaint

At any time during the process, a complainant may withdraw their complaint by giving written notice to the person responsible for handling their complaint. Upon such withdrawal,

consideration of the complaint will usually be discontinued, unless not following the procedure may result in harm to the individual or the organisation.

Confidentiality and Whistleblowing

To enable a full investigation, complainants must provide their names and contact details. However, in some instances, a complainant may wish to remain anonymous.

We always aim to keep a whistleblower's identity confidential where asked to do so, although this cannot be guaranteed. There may be situations where we have a duty to disclose identity, for example to:

- The police, fraud prevention agencies, or other law enforcement agencies (to investigate or prevent crime, including fraud)
- The courts (court proceedings)
- Relevant authorities where there are safeguarding concerns
- The Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain are part of any investigations into issues around qualification delivery
- Other third parties, e.g., Regulators

Data Protection

To process a complaint, the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain will process personal data about the complainant, including data the individual provides and data provided by others in response to the complaint. We will hold this data securely in accordance with our current retention policy and use it only to address the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will be known only to those who need to consider it and will not be revealed to others or made public.

However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applies, or allegations involve the conduct of third parties.

How to Contact the Regulators

If, after the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain has been through both stages and the complainant is still not satisfied with the result, they should be advised that there is no further right of appeal with the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain, but they can approach any of the following agencies for advice:

- A solicitor - [Home | The Law Society](#)
- Citizens Advice Bureau - [Citizens Advice](#)

- The Charity Commission - <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

This should be done within one month of receiving the appeal outcome.

Review of this Policy and Complaints Received

This policy will be reviewed by the Trustee Board every 3 years, and all complaints received (and compliments) will be brought before the Board for review at our regular Board meetings. Through regular review, we aim to improve our services to you and ensure that any lessons learned are implemented within our organisation.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest; for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also involve the Chair and/or a Trustee as a person leading a Stage 2 review.

Date of Document Implementation:	05/12/2025
Date Review Due:	05/12/2028