

HANDING THIRD PARTY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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Third party complaints are complaints about the service made by someone who is neither a client nor a volunteer. These complaints might come from variety of sources, for example:

- a trader or employer who's unhappy about the way the local Citizens Advice has helped a client in a dispute with them
- the local Citizens Advice's landlord
- a contractor
- an ex-member of staff
- a partner organisation

Typical subjects of third party complaints are:

- conflict of interest issues, where the other party in a case can't be seen by the local Citizens Advice
- the other party in a case objects to the local Citizens Advice involvement or representation of a client
- complaints about the treatment of, or advice given to a relative
- complaints about the organisation by other local Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice Telford & the Wrekin (CAT&W) - Third Party Complaint Procedure

Local Citizens Advice are responsible for managing these complaints ourselves, and they aren't usually eligible to be reviewed by national Citizens Advice or the Financial Ombudsman Service.

The chief officer should acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days, and briefly explain the third party complaint procedure and provide a full response within 20 working days of receiving the complaint.

The response should explain that if the complainant is unhappy with the way their complaint was handled, they can ask for a review by the chair, or another trustee if the chair is unavailable. The chair's decision is final.

A request for a review by the chair or other trustee should be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt, and the final response should be sent within 20 working days.

If the third party complaint is about the chief officer, the chair should do the investigation and response, and another trustee or independent person should do the review of the complaint, if one is requested.

Investigating and responding to third party complaints

Investigating third party complaints should be done with the same rigour as client complaints. [Check the process for investigating complaints.](#)

It can be impossible to provide a specific, in-depth response to a third party complaint because to do so would breach a client's confidentiality. The third party complainant's right to a response doesn't supersede the client's right of confidentiality.

Therefore, third party complaints tend to prompt generic responses, which explain how the Citizens Advice policies, safeguards and quality assurance processes work.

Occasionally, third party complaints might arise when a client has taken inappropriate action in a case, and the third party blames Citizens Advice. In these situations, the response should explain how Citizens Advice advice process works, with reference to the policies and procedures used.

Complaints about fundraising

Complaints from individuals who have donated or have been asked to donate money to local Citizens Advice are regulated by the Fundraising Regulator.

Complaints of this nature should be handled under the third party complaint process because the topic of the complaint isn't associated with the individual being a 'client' of Citizens Advice.

Complainants are expected to raise concerns with local Citizens Advice before they contact the Fundraising Regulator so we have a chance to investigate and respond.

If the complaint is not resolved after the formal response or review by the trustee board, the client is informed they can escalate to the Fundraising Regulator and provided with details on how to do this.

[Check how to make a complaint on the Fundraising Regulator website.](#)

Reviews of third party complaints

Third party complaints aren't eligible to be reviewed by National Citizens Advice unless they have been assessed as high risk. [Check the guidance on complaints made through Citizens Advice](#) for how they define high risk.

In most cases, third party complaints aren't eligible to be reviewed by the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). It's therefore important that the local Citizens Advice or service provider offers a review stage within the third party complaints procedure, so that complainants are able to seek a review of the way their complaint was handled, if they feel it was unfair or the outcome was wrong.

Citizens Advice has discussed some common third party complaint scenarios with FOS to clarify whether the complainant had 'referral rights' to FOS:

Common third party complaint scenarios	
Complaint	FOS response
Creditors, when the complaint derives from advice or action by Citizens Advice in support of a client	No right to complain to FOS because the creditor isn't a customer or potential customer of the Citizens Advice
A partner or ex-partner of a client, when the complaint derives from Citizens Advice action in support of the client	No right to complain to FOS unless they were previously joint client clients and are complaining about advice given during that period
A partner organisation which also has an interest in advising the client	No right to complaint to FOS unless they're complaining on behalf of the client

TABLE OF AMENDMENTS

Changes to Policy or Amendments

Date:	
Wording before changes:	
Wording after changes:	

Date:	Description:
29.07.23	Content updated from CitA