



# **Torus Foundation Customer Feedback Policy**

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## **1. Scope**

- 1.1 The purpose of setting out the principles and processes to be followed in this Customer Feedback Policy is to ensure that there is a clear and transparent approach to the handling of compliments, complaints, and general service-related suggestions. The opportunity to listen to what our customers say is important and will enable us to improve our services.
- 1.2 The policy has been designed to demonstrate to our customers that there is an established process whereby service improvement suggestions, issues or concerns can be raised in a simple and fair way. We will then take every opportunity to improve as a result of listening to customer views and then taking the appropriate action.
- 1.3 This policy enables customers to tell us when they feel that they have received outstanding service.
- 1.4 This policy gives customers a mechanism to provide feedback to both help shape the company and hold it accountable for the services provided.
- 1.5 All customers that Torus Foundation provides a service to have the right to feedback relating to the service provided. Customers could be direct customers of Torus Foundation or customers of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party partner.
- 1.6 Torus Foundation will not deal with any feedback made about any other Torus Group member. If information is received incorrectly by Torus Foundation about another Torus Group member, then it will be referred to the relevant organisation to deal with within their own Policy.

## **2. Policy Statement**

- 2.1 Torus Foundation is committed to providing excellent customer service that furthers its mission of growing stronger communities, through investing resources into projects that bring people together and change lives. This policy is designed to make it easy for customers to provide Torus Foundation with feedback about services that they receive. Listening to customer feedback and taking appropriate action will help Torus Foundation to continually improve the quality of services.
- 2.2 The Data Protection Act 2018 sets out legal responsibilities on all organisations processing personal data and provides for rights in the law conveyed on the people whose data are being processed. The Torus Data Protection Policy is a public statement describing Torus' approach to complying with its legal responsibilities in the Data Protection Act and how it enables individual rights to be upheld and exercised. This policy outlines our approach to the collection, storage, access to, provision and disclosure of data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

## **3. Aims and Key Objectives**

- 3.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that all Customer Feedback is properly and effectively implemented and that customers feel confident that their feedback is recognised, acknowledged, listened to, and acted upon promptly and fairly where required.

- 3.2 Customers and their representatives are aware of how to provide feedback and that Torus Foundation provides opportunities for them to do so.
- 3.3 Customer feedback is dealt with promptly, fairly, sensitively with due regard to the worry and upset that they can cause to both staff and customers.
- 3.4 All feedback is monitored monthly, and trends are analysed to identify areas for service improvement.

## 4. Definitions

4.1 For the purpose of this policy the word 'customer' is defined as anyone that has contact with Torus Foundation.

4.2 Torus Foundation defines feedback as:

*"Information about a product, project, activity, a person's performance of a task, etc. which is used as a basis for improvement, reflection or recognition".*

Feedback can therefore be positive, represented as a compliment; neutral, represented as a suggestion; or negative; represented as a complaint.

4.3 Torus Foundation defines a compliment as:

*"An expression of praise or admiration for the organisation and its services, or an individual".*

4.4 Torus Foundation defines a suggestion as:

*"An expression of interest in services, activities, projects or products whilst offering suggestions for what may be changed, added or removed from Torus Foundation where there is a collective benefit beyond individual need."*

4.5 Foundation defines a complaint as:

*"An expression of dissatisfaction, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers".*

4.6 In contrast, an enquiry is an initial request for service or a question about the service that we provide. Enquiries are excluded from the provisions of this policy.

4.7 Definitions are intentionally broad to enable common sense to be applied in deciding what is a compliment, complaint, or suggestion. The approach to be taken is if in doubt, the customer should be asked if they would like to make a complaint.

## **5. Implementation**

### **5.1 Receiving Feedback**

We will welcome feedback and provide a range of options for customers to use, including in person, in writing, by e mail, online forms, or by phone. Customers can relay or hand in their feedback in person to any customer facing staff. Customers who provide feedback on social media (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) will be directed to other channels to submit their feedback.

Feedback may be received via a partner organisation or directly by Torus Foundation.

### **5.2 Compliments**

5.2.1 All customers are encouraged to tell us when they feel that they have received outstanding service.

5.2.2 Compliments are recorded to help us understand what is important to customers so that they can be used to further improve our services in the future and enable us to share good practice.

5.2.3 Feedback on compliments is given to staff and their line manager and may be publicised in recognition of the outstanding customer service delivered by our teams.

5.2.4 Where compliments are received, the relevant manager will acknowledge and thank the customer within 48 hours.

### **5.3 Suggestions**

5.3.1 All customers are encouraged to provide suggestions on our services.

5.3.2 Suggestions are recorded to help us understand what is important to customers so that they can be used to further improve our services in the future.

5.3.3 Where suggestions are received, the relevant manager will acknowledge and thank the customer within 48 hours.

5.3.4 Where suggestions are actionable then an action plan should be put in place with an outcome communicated to the customer when the action has been completed.

5.3.5 Where a suggestion is not practical or is not immediately possible, the relevant manager should communicate with the customer the reasons.

5.3.6 All recorded suggestions, and their outcomes and / or action plans are reviewed by the Leadership Team on a monthly basis.

### **5.4 Informal Complaints**

5.4.1 Occasionally a customer may be unhappy with our actions or services provided but have no interest in engaging in a formal investigation or may not require us to respond to their concerns in writing. On these occasions we will work with the customer concerned to achieve a solution that is acceptable to all parties. We will usually take this approach when dealing with straight forward problems and only where we have the express consent of the customer(s). The outcome will be fed back to the customer in person, in writing or over the phone.

- 5.4.2 **'Right-In-Five'** is the informal process which encourages Torus Foundation to resolve a potential complaint within five working days. The emphasis is on communication, understanding the issue and providing the customer with the confidence that the issue will be resolved by an agreed date along with commitment to managing their expectations and the issue through to resolution and the outcome can be communicated by phone or face to face.
- 5.4.3 Informal complaints are recorded to help us understand what is important to customers so that they can be used to further improve our services in the future.
- 5.4.4 All recorded informal complaints, and their outcomes and / or action plans are reviewed by the Leadership Team on a monthly basis.

## 5.5 Complaints

- 5.5.2 Occasionally a customer may be unhappy with our actions or services provided and all customers are encouraged and will have the means to submit a formal complaint.
- 5.5.3 This policy sets out our two-stage approach to managing and resolving formal complaints. We will do this by;
- Welcoming all complaints on service standards
  - making it easy for customers to submit a complaint
  - Treating all customers fairly
  - Resolving matters locally and as quickly as possible by being open, accountable and outcome focused
  - Resolving complaints at the first point of contact wherever possible
  - Ensuring all complaints are addressed and dealt with within specified timescales
  - Recording, monitoring, and analysing complaints in order to examine service performance to improve service delivery
  - Acknowledging that sometimes things go wrong, that complaints are viewed positively and that they provide us with an opportunity to put things right
  - Learning from customer feedback and promoting how feedback is used to improve services
  - Having a range of options available to us to put things right when there has been a service failure
- 5.5.4 Torus Foundation recognises that 'Client organisations' we work with may have regulated complaints processes and may be scrutinised by an Ombudsman.

## 6. Complaints Process

- 6.1 We will always try to resolve a problem straight away at point of contact if the customer is agreeable and this approach offers the probability of an acceptable outcome. However, we recognise that there are times when this will not always be possible or appropriate.

- 6.2 Complaints will be triaged by the Torus Foundation Business Support Team (if received centrally) and allocated to the correct Manager to be dealt with. Relevant staff will have been trained in handling complaints and will be empowered to deal with complaints as they arise. Where Torus Foundation has got things wrong staff will apologise and explain what went wrong and what action will be taken to put things right. When responding in writing we will make it clear what stage in the process the response relates to and give clear guidance on how to escalate a complaint if the customer does not feel their complaint has been resolved.
- 6.3 All complaints will be categorised by Torus Foundation into 'types' in order to amass performance data and determine any trends, and to determine corrective action to resolve the complaint and 'fix' the failure to avoid future occurrences. Complaint 'types' are as follows;
- Service failure
  - Staff conduct
  - Recruitment
  - Health and Safety
  - Communication (social media, email, phone call etc)
  - Fundraising / Charity use of funds

The above list is not exhaustive and will be reviewed as information becomes available.

#### **6.4 Stage 1 Complaints**

- 6.4.1 On receipt of a complaint, the customer will be contacted by Torus Foundation at the earliest opportunity in order to quickly grasp the nature of the complaint, the expected outcome and will always seek clarification from the customer if this is not clear. We will aim to respond and '**put things right**' or provide agreed actions and timescales for resolving more complex complaints within 10 working days. If this is not possible the investigating officer will provide the customer with an explanation and the date by which the response will be received. This will need to be agreed with the complainant and the referring officer.
- 6.4.2 Torus Foundation will maintain contact with the customer and keep them regularly updated throughout the course of the complaint even where there is no new information to provide. We should be able to evidence that this contact has taken place.
- 6.4.3 The investigating officer will **always** respond to the Stage 1 complaint in writing. In our Stage 1 response we will address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions that we have made, referencing the relevant policy, law, and good practice where appropriate.
- 6.4.4 If a customer is not satisfied with our Stage 1 response, they can ask us to escalate their complaint to Stage 2 giving their reasons for a further review.

#### **6.5 Stage 2 Complaints**

- 6.5.1 If the complaint is not resolved to the customer's satisfaction at Stage 1 it will be progressed to Stage 2. It is not necessary for the customer to provide us with additional information in support of their case or prove in any way that our Stage 1 response decision is wrong.

- 6.5.2 Where possible we should try to find out what it is about our Stage 1 decision that the complainant disagrees with and what they want us to do to put things right. If referred via a partner organisation Torus Foundation will look to ascertain their preferred resolution.
- 6.5.3 Our failure to respond to a Stage 1 complaint within our 10 working days target doesn't result in an automatic right of escalation to Stage 2. Complaints can only be escalated to Stage 2 once we have responded at Stage 1.
- 6.5.4 A Stage 2 investigation will be conducted by a senior manager or Director although this may vary from time to time depending upon the nature of the complaint and who responded at Stage 1. The only mandatory requirements are that the Stage 2 respondent is not the same person who responded at Stage 1 and, they are not subordinate to the Stage 1 respondent.
- 6.5.5 The Stage 2 respondent need not be from the service to which the complaint relates. Indeed, there may be occasions when an 'independent' review has its advantages.
- 6.5.6 We will aim to keep the customer and where appropriate, any partner or representative, updated throughout the course of our Stage 2 investigations and respond in writing with our decision within 20 working days of the date of receipt of the request to escalate, and quicker than this wherever possible. If this is not possible the investigating officer will provide the customer with an explanation and the date by which the Stage 2 response will be received. This will need to be agreed with the customer and must not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason. Our Stage 2 response will bring the complaint to a close.

## **6.6 Responding to Complaints**

- 6.6.1 We will respond to all Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints in writing. Our written responses will:
- Identify the complaint
  - Identify the complaint stage
  - State the outcome of the complaint
  - Outline the reasons for any decisions made
  - List the details of any remedy offered to put things right
  - Identify any outstanding actions
  - Give clear guidance on how to escalate the matter if the customer remains dissatisfied
- 6.6.2 Communication with the customer should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors as their actions are undertaken on behalf of Torus Foundation.
- 6.6.3 There will be times when we are unable to provide a comprehensive response in the timeframes set out. On these occasions we may extend a response deadline by up to a maximum of 10 working days. On these occasions customers will be kept up to date and will receive an explanation for any delays.

## **6.7 Outcomes and Remedies**

- 6.7.1 What we need to ask ourselves is, where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? The aim of providing redress is to restore a person to the position they would have been in had the issue not occurred.

- 6.7.2 Complaints can be resolved in a number of ways. Any proposed remedy will reflect the extent of any service failure(s), and the level of detriment caused to the complainant as a result.
- 6.7.3 The form of response will depend on the category and stage of the complaint. In most circumstances it will be appropriate to issue an apology and imitate the internal corrective action process.
- 6.7.4 We will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and acknowledge that we may need to adapt our processes, procedures, and policy to accommodate an individual customer's needs.

## **6.8 Complaint Closure**

### 6.8.1 Examples of when a complaint would be closed

- An investigation is complete, and a response is sent and there is no further contact from the customer after 28 days.
- When a resolution is agreed, and we have delivered the proposed solution.
- When a resolution is agreed but we have not yet delivered the solution the complaint may still be closed but only with the customer's consent having first established and agreed what actions we will take to resolve the complaint and the associated timescales. We will undertake to re-open the complaint at the next appropriate stage if we fail to deliver the agreed solution(s).

6.8.2 We reserve the right to use our discretion when applying this policy and may deal with a complaint differently where individual circumstances merit it. This discretion will always be applied fairly and appropriately, and complaints will be progressed as far as possible to maximise the opportunity to resolve a dispute.

## **6.9 Exclusions**

6.9.1 There are occasions when Torus Foundation will not consider complaints made under this Policy. These include;

- It becomes clear that the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago. However, where the problem is a recurring issue, we will consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this helps to resolve the issue for the customer. (N.B. it may not be appropriate to rely on this exclusion where complaints concern safeguarding or health and safety issues.)
- Legal proceedings have started. We will take steps to ensure that customers are not left without a response for lengthy periods of time, for example, where a letter before action has been received or issued but no court proceedings are started, or settlement agreement reached.
- Any restrictions placed on a customer's contact due to unacceptable behavior should be appropriate to their needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

6.9.2 One of the key principles underlying our approach to complaint management is that we will always aim to treat customers fairly. We don't operate blanket exclusions and will consider each complaint on its merits before applying an exclusion.

6.9.3 If we decide not to accept a complaint a detailed written explanation will be provided to the complainant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.

6.9.4 Any allegations about alleged inappropriate conduct by Torus Foundation member of staff, volunteer or Board Member will be handled separately in accordance with Torus policies.

6.9.5 Anonymous complaints will be recorded and investigated. Whilst it is not possible to acknowledge receipt or respond directly to the person making the complaint Torus Foundation will still look to investigate and treat as feedback.

#### 6.10 Escalation

If a customer is not happy with how the Torus Foundation deals with the complaint (after Stage 2), they will be advised to contact the relevant regulator.

##### 6.10.1 Fundraising complaints

Customers can complain themselves or on behalf of someone else to the Fundraising Regulator, if the complaint is in relation to;

- the way we have been asked for donations
- how we as fundraisers have behaved

##### 6.10.2 Advertising complaints

Customers can contact the Advertising Standards Authority to complain about:

- an advertising campaign you think is offensive, deceptive, or inaccurate
- the number of emails or mail you get from a charity

##### 6.10.3 Other serious complaints

Customers can complain to the Charity Commission if a charity is, for example:

- not doing what it claims to do
- losing lots of money
- harming people
- being used for personal profit or gain
- involved in illegal activity

The Commission's involvement in looking at complaints is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to a charity's beneficiaries, assets, services, or reputation.

## **7. Responsibility**

### **7.1 Compliments**

7.1.1 It is the responsibility of all staff to acknowledge and thank the customer for a received compliment and to forward to the line manager for reference.

7.1.2 It is the responsibility of the Manager to:

- log the customer's compliment on the Customer Feedback Register.
- Publicise the compliment received.

### **7.2 Suggestions**

7.2.1 It is the responsibility of all staff to acknowledge and thank the customer for a received suggestion and to forward to the line manager for reference.

7.2.2 It is the responsibility of the Manager to:

- log the suggestion on the Customer Feedback Register and acknowledge the customers' suggestion.
- create an action plan and communicate with the Customer when an outcome has been achieved, or in the case where an suggestion is not practical to communicate this effectively

### **7.3 Complaints**

7.3.1 It is the responsibility of the Manager to:

- Acknowledge the complaint received within a reasonable time frame.
- Undertake investigations relating to the complaint
- Maintain good contact with the customer
- Seek to resolve customer complaints within the timescale set out in this policy
- Adhere to all processes outlined in this policy

### **7.4 Other Responsible Staff**

#### **7.4.1 Business Support Coordinator**

It is the responsibility of the Business Support Coordinator to:

- Triage customer feedback received by email, phone or on social media.
- monitor the policy, processes and procedures relating to Customer Feedback.
- provide a report each month (or as often as required) summarising the Customer Feedback received and the outcomes of complaints for the Leadership team to review.

#### **7.4.2 Leadership Team**

It is the responsibility of the Leadership Team to:

- Ensure staff and managers are adhering to the Customer Feedback Policy when managing feedback.

- Reviewing and utilising data from Customer Feedback for the purposes of service improvement and reoccurrence of underperformance.

## **8. Diversity & Inclusion**

8.1 The Policy supports Torus Foundation's Equality and Diversity aims. In recognition of this we aim to deliver services that are;

- Relevant and fully accessible to all
- Tailored to meet both the specific needs of the individual, including those with additional support needs, and the diverse needs of the wider community
- Compliant with all aspects of Equality and Diversity legislation, and specifically the Equality Act 2010

## **9. Monitoring & Review**

9.1 The key aims are to;

- To provide staff with the information they need to manage their own performance
- To allow the Leadership team to effectively manage Torus Foundation's performance
- To allow Company Directors to take a strategic view on Company performance
- To ensure that we regularly review customer feedback about the service
- To ensure that lessons are learned, and service improvements implemented

9.2 Performance is monitored on a monthly basis with regular updates provided to key Managers and the Torus Foundation Leadership Team. In addition, a more detailed Quarterly Performance Report is provided to the Torus Foundation Board on key performance indicators.

9.3 Torus Foundation will review this policy every three years and carry out interim reviews considering legislative, policy or procedural changes.

## **10. Supporting Policies**

- Torus Whistleblowing Policy
- Torus Complaints Policy
- Torus Data Protection Policy
- Torus Disciplinary Policy
- Torus Employee Code of Conduct Probity Policy
- Torus Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Torus Management of Allegations Against Staff Policy
- Torus Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Torus Safeguarding Children Policy
- Torus Social Media Policy