

Complaints at a glance

If you made your complaint through our helpline, the volunteer will share it with the Quality and Service Improvement Team

The Quality and Service Improvement Team will get in touch to confirm they've received your complaint and explain how the investigation will work.

A senior volunteer, usually a Branch Director, will investigate your complaint. They'll talk to the volunteer you spoke to and anyone else involved. Once the investigation is done, they'll get in touch with you using your preferred method to share the results.



Appeals at a glance

If you're not happy with the result of the investigation, you can ask for an appeal. Just send a letter or email to the Quality and Service Improvement Team. If it's hard for you to do this in writing, let the team know.

The team will confirm they got your request

A Board Trustee and a Regional Director will look into your complaint. You'll be invited to speak with them, and they'll also speak separately with the volunteers from the first investigation. After reviewing everything, they'll decide if the original outcome was fair. You'll then be invited to a final meeting where they'll share their decision with you.

You'll then receive the result of your appeal in writing.



Making a complaint about our service

Who can complaint?

Anyone who's had a negative experience with our service can make a complaint. We want our complaints process to be fair, welcoming, and easy to follow. This is part of our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, which you can read more about [here](#).

What happens when I contact Samaritans to make a complaint?

Depending on how you contact us, the first person you speak to might be a helpline volunteer or someone from our Quality and Service Improvement Team at Samaritans Central Office.

They'll give you a safe space to talk and will listen carefully. They might ask a few questions to better understand what happened.

Sometimes, they can offer an explanation that resolves the issue for you.

If you're still not satisfied, we'll look into your complaint further. The Quality and Service Improvement Team handles these investigations. If you're speaking to a helpline volunteer, they'll ask for some extra details, like how you'd prefer to be contacted and your contact details. This information will be passed on securely to the Quality and Service Improvement Team—usually within **5 working days**.

How does the investigation work?

After the Quality and Service Improvement Team gets your complaint, someone will contact you within **5 working days** using your preferred method.

They'll confirm they've received your complaint, explain how the investigation works, and give you a chance to ask questions. They'll also check your availability should they need to contact you again and ask if you have any accessibility needs so they can make adjustments if needed.

Your complaint will then be passed to an Investigating Volunteer—usually the Branch Director from the Samaritans branch involved. This person will speak to the volunteer you spoke to and anyone else involved. The investigation usually takes up to **2 weeks**, but you'll be told if it might take longer.

Once it's finished, the Investigating Volunteer will contact you with the outcome, using your preferred method and considering your availability. If phone is your preferred method and they can't get hold of you the first time, they'll try twice more. They may leave a voicemail saying they're calling about your complaint, but won't mention Samaritans. You can let us know if you'd rather not receive voicemails.

Possible outcomes of an investigation

Upheld – we found enough evidence to support your complaint

Unsubstantiated – we're unable to uphold the complaint, usually because there wasn't enough supporting evidence or some evidence contradicted it.

Unable to investigate - we don't have enough information to investigate—this could be because key details are missing or too much time has passed since the contact

The outcome should include a clear explanation of what the investigation found and why the complaint was upheld or not.

What support is available to me during the investigation?

If you have questions about the investigation, you can contact the Quality and Service Improvement team.

If you need emotional support during this time, you can still reach out to Samaritans as usual. The volunteer you speak to won't know about your complaint, and it won't affect the support you receive. They won't be able to talk about the complaint with you.

Can someone make a complaint on my behalf?

We encourage you to make the complaint yourself if you can. If you'd rather someone else do it for you—like a family member, friend, or professional—we'll need your written consent, such as an email or letter. If you can't provide written consent due to accessibility needs, let us know and we'll work with you to find a suitable alternative.

Are there ever situations where you can't investigate a complaint?

We try to investigate all complaints that can't be resolved with an explanation or apology. However, there are times when we may not be able to investigate. This includes situations where:

- We don't have the following information:
 - Your name and contact details
 - The phone number used to call our helpline (if your complaint is about a phone call)

- The email address used to contact us (if your complaint is about an email)
- Some details of what was spoken about (if your complaint is about an online chat)
- The date and time of the contact
- The complaint is about another organisation;
- The complaint has been sent to us and other organisations as part of a bulk mailing;
- The issue has already been investigated and closed;
- The complaint includes threatening or abusive language toward our staff, volunteers, or supporters.

It's best to raise a complaint as soon as possible after the incident. If too much time has passed, it can be hard for volunteers to remember the details, which makes it difficult to investigate in full.

What if I'm not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation?

If you're unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, you can ask for an appeal. Just send a written request to the Quality and Service Improvement Team within **15 working days** of getting the result.

If you need extra support—like help writing the request or more time due to personal circumstances—reasonable adjustments can be made. Feel free to speak with the team to discuss your needs.

How does an appeal work?

Once you request an appeal, the Quality and Service Improvement Team will confirm they've received it within 3 working days. The appeal will be investigated by a Trustee and a Regional Director (someone senior who isn't connected to the branch involved in your complaint).

You'll be invited to a meeting to talk about your complaint. The volunteer involved in your complaint won't be there. The meeting is usually held by phone or video call, and we can make adjustments if you have accessibility needs.

The investigating team will also speak separately with:

- The volunteer who originally looked into your complaint
- The volunteer involved in the contact
- Anyone else relevant to the case

After the investigation, you'll be invited to a final meeting to hear the outcome.

This will also be by phone or video call, with adjustments available if needed. You'll get a written summary of the outcome within **3 working days** of that meeting. If you need the written response in a specific format, just let us know.

Appeals usually take place within a month. If it needs to take longer, we'll keep you updated.

If we don't hear from you for **10 working days** during the appeal process, we'll close the appeal. In some cases we may be able to reopen the appeal if there was a reason you were unable to contact us in that time.

What support is available to me during an appeal?

If you have questions or need help with your appeal, you can contact the Quality and Service Improvement team.

You can also request to have a friend or supporter join you for meetings with the investigating team.

If you need emotional support during the appeal, you can reach out to Samaritans as usual. The volunteer won't know about your complaint, and it won't affect the support you receive.

What if I'm not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal?

If you're not happy with the outcome of your appeal:

- **In England, Wales or Northern Ireland:** Contact the Charity Commission at 0845 300 0218 or visit www.charitycommission.gov.uk
- **In Scotland:** Call the Scottish Charity Regulator at 01382 220446 or go to www.oscr.org.uk
- **In Ireland:** Reach the Charities Regulator at (01) 633 1500 or visit www.charitiesregulator.ie

Data protection and confidentiality

We handle all feedback and complaints data according to GDPR. You can find more details in our privacy statement online.

We don't accept audio recordings as evidence.

Recording meetings or conversations during the complaints process is usually not allowed. However, if needed, we can make exceptions—only if everyone agrees in advance and gives written consent.

Where can I go if I have more questions about making a complaint?

If you have questions or need help with the complaints process, you can contact the Quality and Service Improvement Team at Samaritans Central Office:

1. Phone:

- UK: 020 8394 8313
- Ireland: 0189 20946 (local Irish rate)

2. Email: feedback@samaritans.org

3. Post:

Quality and Service Improvement Team
Samaritans
The Upper Mill
Kingston Road
Ewell, Surrey, KT17