

# Architects Benevolent Society Complaints Procedure

The Architects Benevolent Society (ABS) is committed to being open and honest in all our dealings with our donors and supporters. But we know that things can go wrong and it is important that those who support us in any way have access to an accredited means of making a complaint and that this can be, if necessary, examined by an outside agency. In this case the investigation and resolution of complaints which cannot be settled between the complainant and the ABS will be carried out by the Fundraising Standard Board (FRSB).

## 1. Definition of a complaint

The FRSB will deal with all complaints that are concerned with a breach of the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice or a breach of the Fundraising Promise provided that the complainant has first directed the complaint to the ABS and has not been satisfied with the answer received.

## 2. Complaints made by telephone

We will gather the facts using open questions. At the end of the call we will summarise the call to confirm that we have understood the situation. If we are knowledgeable about the area of the complaint, we will then try to resolve the complaint over the phone. If you are satisfied with our action that is the end of the matter except that we note the complaint in the report which is submitted annually to the Fundraising Standards Board. If you are not satisfied then we will proceed as detailed in the section 6 below. ***In any case we will take your contact details and acknowledge the complaint in writing within 14 days including a summary of your telephone conversation and confirmation that the complaint will be dealt with within 30 days.***

## 3. Complaints made in writing by post or email

The ABS will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 14 days, confirming that we will seek to resolve the complaint within 30 working days. At this stage further contact with you will only be made if we have insufficient details to take the complaint forward.

## 4. Our procedures

We will establish the area of ABS work that the complaint involves. Having first consulted with relevant staff, we will make contact with the Chair of the Trustees or other appropriate person to inform them of the situation and gather any relevant information regarding the circumstances of the case.

If a third party is involved (for example a supplier), we will also speak to them to gather any information about the circumstances of the complaint. We will take care to record all the important points and file these with the case notes.

Having gathered all the relevant information, we will meet with the Chair of the Trustees (or another person appointed in the Chair's absence) and the ABS staff concerned and we will include suppliers if they have been implicated.

The assessment meeting will set out the nature of the complaint and determine what action needs to be taken. If the complaint is about fundraising then we will make a note on whether it is about an alleged breach of the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice and/or the Fundraising Standards Board Fundraising Promise. The FRSB will need this information if the complaint is referred to them. The outcome of the meeting will typically produce one of two options:

- The complaint is *justified*. We will then write to you to apologise and let you know that as a result of the complaint we have improved our future fundraising activities and we will tell you how this will be done. We will also instigate action to prevent any recurrence of the problem.
- The complaint is *not justified*. We will write to you to explain that we will not be changing our fundraising practices and give clear reasons for our position. We will always take complaints very

seriously and assure you the investigation will be as thorough as possible. Accurate records will be kept of all the investigations which have carried out.

### **5. Extension of information gathering period**

In exceptional circumstances, we may need more time than 30 days to gather all the information (for example, if a key member of staff is on annual leave or sick). If this happens, we will contact you in writing with a copy to the Fundraising Standards Board outlining the situation.

### **6. In the event that the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction**

If you are not happy with our response, you should contact the Fundraising Standards Board within 2 months of receiving the response. We in turn will ensure that all correspondence is on file and that this can be made available to the Fundraising Standards Board if the complaint is pursued further.

If you are still dissatisfied, you can ask the Board of Directors of the Fundraising Standards Board to look again at your complaint. Their decision will be made within 60 days and will be final. The Architects Benevolent Society agrees to abide by decisions made by the FRSB.

### **7. Contact Details**

#### **Architects Benevolent Society**

43 Portland Place  
London  
W1B 1QH  
Telephone: 020 7580 2823  
help@absnet.org.uk

#### **Fundraising Standards Board (FRSB)**

1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
89 Albert Embankment  
London  
SE1 7TP  
Telephone: 0845 402 5442  
www.frsb.org.uk

### **8. Where your concerns relate to:**

- dishonest handling of funds
- misapplication of charitable funds
- actions that contravene the Architects Benevolent Society's trust deed or charity law
- actions that threaten to bring the Architects Benevolent Society into disrepute

You should contact:

#### **The Charity Commission**

PO Box 1227  
Liverpool  
L69 3UG  
Telephone: 0845 300 0218  
www.charity-commission.gov.uk