October 2026

NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS
Protecting Consumers
Supporting Business

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

National Trading Standards (NTS) is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone we deal with and takes complaints about our services seriously.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, that relates to the standard of service and behaviour of the NTS Chair, any NTS Board members and any member of staff from the NTS Programme Office (when acting in an NTS capacity).

Our complaints policy does not cover

- dissatisfaction with an NTS agreed policy or decisions about individual cases or grants or requests for assistance;
- matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaint's procedure.

If someone wishes to pursue a complaint relating to any of the above, they must make the complaint to the relevant Government Department who provides the grant for relevant activities. This will be signposted.

Anonymous complaints

Information will be recorded but no response will be made to anonymous complaints.

Complaints about the actions for Local Authorities

Any complaints about the action of any local authority when delivering NTS funded activities must be referred to the relevant local authority to be handled via their formal complaints processes and ultimate recourse to the relevant Ombudsman in England and Wales, where appropriate.

Our Standards for Handling Complaints

We will treat all complaints seriously and you will be always treated with courtesy and fairness. However any abusive correspondence to our staff will not be tolerated.

We will treat your complaint in confidence within NTS.

We will deal with your complaint promptly and you will receive acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within five working days.

We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your status within any protected group under the Equalities Act and other related legislation:

Complaints may be referred to external legal advisers if deemed necessary by the NTS Director.

Third Party Reporting

Complainants may wish to have a third-party act on their behalf. A third party is any person or organisation acting on behalf of or making enquiries for the complainant. Where a third party is helping a complainant with a particular complaint and written authority is held to that effect, if the representative asks to be kept informed of progress on the complaint all possible steps will be taken to ensure that this happens.

Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of relevant data protection legislation.

How to Complain

- All complaints must be in writing, either by email or letter.
- We have a two-stage complaints procedure. At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure.

The Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1
This is the first opportunity for NTS to resolve a complainant's dissatisfaction, and most complaints will be resolved at this stage. In the first instance, any complaint should be addressed to the NTS Director who will try to resolve it.

Acknowledgement within 5 working days
Full response within 20 working days

A complainant has a maximum of 20 working days from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.

Stage 2
If you are dissatisfied with this response, or your complaint is about the NTS Director, the complaint will be reviewed by the Chair of the NTS Board. Your request should be sent to the address given below, who will forward your request to the Chair for a review.

Acknowledgement within 5 working days
Full response within 20 working days

A complainant has a maximum of 20 working days from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.

Stage 3

If having followed the two stages of our complaints procedure you remain dissatisfied, you can ask to have your complaint reviewed by the full NTS Board whose determination will be final. Your request should be sent to the address given below.

Complaints about the NTS Chair

If your complaint relates to the NTS Chair, this will be considered by the full NTS Board.

Extending time limits

If a complaint is very complex, or requires external legal advice, it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case, we will keep the complainant informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and inform them of the new deadline.

Remedies

When we get things wrong, we will act to

- explain what went wrong and why, and
- put things right by making any changes required.

An apology is not an acceptance of liability under Section 2 of the Compensation Act 2006.

Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

All complaints will be processed in accordance with this policy. However, during this process, staff may have contact with unreasonable complainant behaviour and unreasonably persistent or vexatious complainants A very small minority of customers make complaints that are vexatious, in that they persist unreasonably with their complaints, or make complaints in order to make life difficult for the Board rather than genuinely to resolve a grievance. This may involve making serial complaints about different matters or continuing to raise the same or similar matters repeatedly. In such cases we may need to address unacceptable behaviour by restricting contact with our officers.

Any forms of threat, aggression or malicious communication will result in NTS ceasing correspondence and, if appropriate, referring the matter to the police.

Contacting us

By letter to: **National Trading Standards , c/o ACTSO Ltd, 1 Sylvan Court, Sylvan Way, Southfields Business Park, Basildon, Essex, SS15 6TH.**

Or by email to**: nationaltradingstandards@actso.org.uk**

Accessibility

The Board is committed to equal opportunities and our aim is to make our corporate complaints policy easy to use and accessible to all of our customers. If you require any additional support to make a complaint, please let us know.