

# External complaints policy

Approved by Board 5 December 2024

## 1. Introduction

This document is the external complaints policy of Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK). The policy sets out the process that PAN UK will follow when receiving a complaint from third parties engaging with PAN UK – organisations or members of the public. It does not address complaints made by staff or volunteers (dealt with through disciplinary and grievance procedures) nor job applicants.

PAN UK endeavours to provide a high standard in all aspects of our work and therefore avoid dissatisfaction and complaints. However, we recognise that there may be instances where we fall short of this ambition and a third party may wish to make a complaint against us. This policy describes what we will do in that eventuality.

## 2. What is within the scope of this policy?

As described above, this policy only relates to complaints received from third parties and does not address complaints made by staff, volunteers or job applicants, where alternative processes are followed. Furthermore, complaints cannot be investigated if they relate to:

- Government legislation or policy;
- Disagreement in science;
- Issues outside of PAN UK's control; or
- Force majeure.

We expect that complaints are likely to be in one or more of the following areas:

- Dissatisfaction with the PAN UK service, such as inadequate work, problems with project work, unacceptable delay or failure to deliver a service, etc;
- Disputes between third parties and the organisation regarding policy, procedures or activities;
- Discourtesy or unhelpfulness on the part of staff.

This list is not intended to be exclusive but an indication of the kinds of complaints that fall within the scope of this policy.

## 3. How to make a complaint?

Complaints should be made in writing and either sent by post to the PAN UK office address (The Brighthelm Centre, North Road, Brighton, BN1 1YD) or sent by email to the PAN UK admin address ([admin@pan-uk.org](mailto:admin@pan-uk.org)).

All complaints must include:

- The full name of the complainant, their address and contact numbers;
- A description of what happened, when it happened and how it has affected the complainant or others; and
- An explanation of what the complainant expects to happen to put things right.

Failure to include any of these pieces of information may lead to the complaint being dismissed without investigation.

#### **4. How will the complaint be investigated?**

Every complaint will initially be investigated by the member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) with responsibility for the area of work that the complaint relates to. The SMT member will review the information contained within the original complaint, take statements from any members of staff that are referred to in the complaint and review any documentation that is pertinent. If additional information is needed to understand the complaint being made or to explore issues within it then the SMT member will contact the complainant directly, either verbally or in writing. Records will be kept of all communications.

The investigation should be completed within fifteen working days of receiving the complaint and the outcome should be communicated in writing within twenty working days of receipt. If it will not be possible to adhere to these timelines (for instance, if the SMT member is on leave or the investigation is particularly complex) then the complainant will be notified of when they will receive notification of the outcome of their complaint within seven working days of receipt of the complaint.

The communication of the outcome will describe what investigations have been carried out, the conclusions of those investigations and what PAN UK has done in response to these conclusions.

#### **5. What if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome?**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome then they are able to escalate the complaint to the Director. This should be done by responding to the communication of the outcome of the original investigation asking for the complaint to be escalated.

The Director will review all documentation compiled during the initial investigation and the outcome reached. Should they feel that it is necessary, they will undertake their own additional investigation to understand the issue and reach their conclusions. Records will be kept of all investigations undertaken.

The Director should complete this investigation within ten working days of receiving the request to escalate and the outcome should be communicated in writing within twelve working days of receipt. If it will not be possible to adhere to these timelines (for instance, if the Director is on leave or the investigation is particularly complex) then the complainant will be notified of when they will receive notification of the outcome of their complaint within seven working days of the escalation..

The communication of the outcome will either state that the outcome of the original investigation remains unchanged or will describe additional actions to be taken by PAN UK.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied then they can ask for the complaint to be escalated to the Chair of Trustees. The Chair is a voluntary role and so the Chair will have 15 working days to investigate the complaint and 20 working days to communicate the outcome of the investigation. The decision of the Chair of Trustees will be final and there will be no further points of escalation within PAN UK.