

Complaints and Investigation Framework and Process

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Purpose of Framework

The Public Fundraising Regulatory Association (PFRA) investigates complaints about members' fundraising where the fundraising has caused harm or has the potential to cause harm, and where these cannot be resolved by the organisations themselves.

Our purpose is to provide a fair, timely, well-documented, and accessible process for receiving, investigating, and determining complaints about PFRA Members whose activities breach our Code of Conduct. We hold members accountable through effective and enforceable penalties where appropriate.

We consider complaints about member fundraising where these cannot be resolved by the organisations themselves. We do so by considering whether the fundraising organisation has complied with the Code of Conduct (the code), which outlines the legal requirements and best practices expected of all charitable fundraising organisations and third-party fundraisers across New Zealand.

We may also initiate investigations where we believe or suspect a breach of the code may have occurred, even though no complaint has been received or where the complaint has been withdrawn.

This process does not, and is not intended to, cover every eventuality. Where an eventuality is not covered, we will use our professional discretion to apply our regulatory policies and procedures appropriately to the particular case in line with our overarching aims.

Our Regulatory Scope

We investigate concerns about the **fundraising conduct** of **PFRA members** in New Zealand. Our goal is to resolve complaints fairly, protect the public, and raise fundraising standards across the sector. We do this by setting and enforcing our Codes and Rules, educating members, accrediting members against the Code, monitoring practice, and taking proportionate action when things go wrong.

Our role in considering complaints

1. **Impartial resolution** – to provide a fair, independent judgment on a complaint and, where possible, resolve the matter for the complainant.
2. **Raise standards for public protection** – to promote learning and continuous improvement across members and the wider sector, lifting practice and safeguarding public trust and confidence.

Key Principles

1. **Fairness** - the process is fair to all parties.
2. **Accountability** - determine accountability, give reasons for decisions.
3. **Accessibility** - available to members and the public, in plain language, at no cost.
4. **Excellence** - effective, timely, properly documented.
5. **Professional integrity** - adequately resourced; sanctions effective and enforceable.

What we can consider

We can review and investigate concerns about a PFRA member's fundraising if you believe a charity, agency, or individual fundraiser has not followed the **PFRA Code of Conduct, Rules, or Guidance**.

Here are examples of the types of issues we can consider:

Fundraiser Behaviour and Conduct

- Misleading or inaccurate information about a charity or how donations will be used
- Applying pressure, harassment, or ignoring "do not approach" requests
- Disrespectful, discriminatory, or unprofessional behaviour
- Failing to wear or display proper identification or uniform

Organisational transparency and accountability

- Not being open about relationships with third-party fundraising agencies or contractors
- Failing to respond properly to a complaint about fundraising
- Ignoring donor wishes about how or when they are contacted

Compliance and safeguarding

- Not following required safeguarding procedures when interacting with children or vulnerable people
- Mishandling personal data or failing to keep donor information secure
- Fundraising without a valid PFRA site booking or breaching site roster rules
- Failing to meet PFRA Accreditation requirements for training, supervision, or quality assurance

We can also consider any **alleged breach of PFRA Codes, Rules, or Guidance** that occurs during a member's fundraising activity.

What we cannot consider

Some issues fall outside what the PFRA can investigate. If your concern relates to one of the following areas, we will record the information and, where possible, refer you to the right organisation for help.

Examples of areas outside of PFRA's scope

- **Criminal or illegal activity:** Contact the New Zealand Police, or the Serious Fraud Office for serious financial crime.
- **Charity legitimacy or registration:** Contact Charities Services / Te Rātā Atawhai (Charities Registration Board).
- **Internal governance disputes** that are not serious wrongdoing or Code breaches: Contact the charity's board or management.
- **Concerns about a charity's services:** Use the charity's own service complaints process.
- **Employment issues:** Contact Employment New Zealand or the Employment Relations Authority.
- **Health and safety risks:** Contact WorkSafe New Zealand - or call 111 if anyone is in immediate danger.
- **Concerns about the safety or welfare of children or vulnerable people:** Contact Oranga Tamariki or the New Zealand Police (call 111 in an emergency).
- **Concerns relating to competition, fair trading, and consumer credit contracts:** Contact the Commerce Commission
- **Fundraising by non-PFRA members:** Contact the organisation directly or the local council. We may still record information for future reference.

Who can complain

Our service is free and can be used by anyone who believes they have been affected by poor fundraising practice.

If we receive multiple complaints about the same issue or organisation, we may identify a lead complaint or lead complaints to investigate.

If a member of the public is not able to make a complaint themselves they can ask someone to make the complaint to us on their behalf. We will ask the person making

the complaint to provide us with adequate consent from the person affected before proceeding.

Reasonable Adjustments

If an individual faces difficulties pursuing their complaint because of a disability, we will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs. This may include interpretations or visual or hearing adjustments.

When will we investigate

We may open or proactively initiate an investigation where one or more of the following apply:

- A complaint about a PFRA Member (including its employees, contractors and subcontractors) has not been resolved through the charity's own process.
- The issue poses a significant risk to public trust, vulnerable people, fundraisers, site partners, or PFRA and its members' reputation.
- There is evidence of a serious or repeated breach of the PFRA Code, Rules, Accreditation conditions or bylaws.
- Credible information arises from media reports, councils or site owners, other regulators (e.g., Charities Services, Privacy Commissioner, Police), whistleblowers, or member self-reports.
- Patterns or intelligence indicate systemic non-compliance that warrants inquiry.

Before making a complaint

We recommend contacting the organisation directly. We think organisations should have an opportunity to respond to complaints before we look at a case. If someone has a complaint about fundraising, they should first complain to the organisation. This is often the quickest way to resolve a complaint and for the organisation to identify learning.

Complaints should be made to the organisation within three months of the incident complained about. Organisations should usually be given four weeks to consider and respond to the complaint.

If a complainant does not receive a response or is unhappy with the response they have received, they can contact us.

How to provide feedback or make a complaint

Use our [online contact form](#) or the email listed on our [Contact page](#). When providing feedback or making a complaint, please provide the following information:

- The name of the organisation or individual (if known) that you're providing feedback on
- When the incident took place
- A brief summary of what happened
- Your name and how you'd like to be contacted
- copies of any fundraising materials that may have given rise to the complaint, or photos or video footage of the incident
- any other evidence the complainant considers supports the complaint; and
- Details of the response to the complaint and why the complainant remains unhappy.

We will not disclose a complainant's identity to the organisation(s) complained about without their consent. In most cases, we will need consent to allow the organisation to respond to any enquiries we may make. If the complainant does not provide us with consent this may affect whether we can deal with the complaint.

Complaints Process – How we respond to complaints

What to expect from our service standards.

Acknowledgement:

We aim to acknowledge complaints within two business day and give you a case number. We will let you know if your concern is in our remit and what will happen next.

Investigation:

If we open an investigation, we'll keep you informed at key stages. This includes when we first notify the people or organisations involved, when we ask for evidence, when we share a draft decision, and when a final decision is made.

We'll clearly explain what the investigation is about to both the person who made the complaint and the organisation involved. We'll also identify the right contact person within the organisation and work directly with them to gather any information or responses we need.

Draft Decision:

If we identify that there has been a breach of the Code, we will first share a draft decision with both the complainant and the organisation involved. You will then have two weeks to review it and provide any feedback or comments.

We will carefully consider all feedback before making and sharing our final decision.

Escalated Cases:

In some cases our draft decision may be considered by our Complaints and Investigations Committee (the committee).

These cases will usually contain wider learning for the membership and may include situations where:

- we have received multiple complaints about the same issue and/or fundraising organisation
- we see cases that are of wider public interest
- we have identified wider or systemic issues within the complaint; or
- there might be a risk to public safety or public confidence in fundraising.

If we decide to refer a case to the committee we will write to the complainant and the organisation let them know why.

The process of investigating the complaint is the same as outlined above.

The draft decision will be referred to the committee for consideration before it is shared with the complainant and the organisation.

The committee will consider any comments made on the draft decision and approve the final decision on the complaint

Final Decision:

If we have identified a breach of the code, we may make recommendations for improvement to the organisations concerned. We may also make recommendations to provide the complainant with an appropriate remedy.

We will set out in our final decision the timescales within which we expect the organisations to comply with our recommendations. Where we have investigated a charitable organisation and made recommendations, we will ask that its trustees oversee compliance with our recommendations.

Recommendations may include:

- an apology for the complainant
- further training and/or action taken to learn from the breach
- recommending that the organisation conducts an independent external audit of their fundraising.
- a financial penalty for the breach to the code.

Non-compliance – When cases of non-compliance are found

If an organisation does not comply with our recommendations, we may:

- Issue further warnings and or escalate to the organisations' board of directors
- Revoke the fundraising organisation from our membership.
- refer the case to the relevant statutory regulator, for example, the Charity Commission or the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO); and

Typical Timeline (working days)

- Decision to investigate: within 7 days of receipt.
- Evidence window: 14 days (we'll confirm any extension process).
- Draft decision for party comment: 2 weeks to respond.
- Final decision: issued within 3 days of sign-off.
- Compliance follow-up: organisations usually have 1–2 months to report back; we review within 10 working days.

Compliance checks

Where recommendations are made, organisations usually have 1–2 months to report back. We review the evidence and either close the case, ask for more information, or take further action (for example, a reminder/meeting, referral to another body, or escalation to our Committee).

Appeals

- A PFRA member may appeal within 1 week of a regulatory letter or final decision by writing to the National Manager.
- If unresolved, the matter may be referred to our Complaints & Investigations Committee; its findings are final within PFRA's process.
- Under our Constitution, an Independent Advisory Committee may be convened; its decision is final and binding.

Improving standards - How we use what we learn

We use casework to support improvement across the sector. From time to time we may publish anonymised learnings and guidance to help members maintain high standards and protect public trust.

How to contact us

Use our [online contact form](#) or the email listed on our [Contact page](#). Please include, if you can:

- Your name and contact details (tell us if you prefer not to be contacted).
- The organisation(s) involved and where/when the incident happened.
- What occurred and why you are concerned.
- Any evidence (documents, screenshots, photos/video).
- Any support you need (e.g. interpreter, alternative format, representative).

Accessibility: Tell us if you need adjustments or an interpreter.

Privacy: We collect only what we need to assess your concern and respond. We store information securely and may share limited information with another agency **only** when necessary and lawful (for example, to protect someone from harm). See our [Privacy Policy](#) for details.

How our self-regulation framework applies in practice

- **Set & improve standards:** We publish and continuously improve Codes, Rules and Guidance for ethical, sustainable fundraising.
- **Educate:** We train and inform fundraisers, members, councils, government and the public on good practice.
- **Co-ordinate & monitor:** We work with councils and business associations on site access, rosters and rest rules; we monitor compliance via audits and mystery shops.
- **Hear & resolve complaints:** We operate an impartial complaints and investigations process for fundraising matters involving PFRA Members.
- **Enforce proportionately:** Through membership agreements, Accreditation conditions and PFRA bylaws, we can require corrective actions, impose penalties available to us, suspend access to rosters/sites, recommend council action, remove or decline Accreditation, and - where warranted - escalate or refer to the appropriate statutory authority.
- **Collaborate:** We engage with like-minded organisations in New Zealand and overseas to align with international best practice and support sector sustainability.

Boundary note: PFRA is a **self-regulatory** body. We do not decide charitable registration or deregistration, employment disputes, service-delivery complaints, or criminal matters.

Where issues fall outside our remit, we will explain why and refer or signpost to the appropriate authority (e.g., Charities Services/Te Rātā Atawhai, Employment NZ/ERA, WorkSafe, Privacy Commissioner, Police/Oranga Tamariki).