DEMOS

External complaints policy and procedure

Last reviewed: May 2026

Who is covered by this procedure?

All beneficiaries, participants, associates and third parties who engage with Demos and its work.

All staff, volunteers and Board of Trustees members are responsible for handling any complaints they receive in line with this procedure.

What is covered by this procedure?

This procedure covers complaints from individuals, associates and third parties and explains what steps need to be taken to ensure effective complaint handling.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that everyone coming into contact with Demos feels that where they have had a less than excellent experience, their feedback or complaint has been taken seriously and dealt with empathetically and efficiently.

Feedback from partner organisations, research participants, associates, supporters and third parties is invaluable in helping us to continuously improve. Negative feedback and complaints are particularly helpful in pinpointing what we need to do better, and if we deal with complaints effectively, we can often improve our relationships with those we work with.

Complaints Policy Statement

Demos:

- is committed to providing a high standard of quality services and information to all external individuals and organisations we work with.
- recognises that individuals, agencies and organisations have the right to raise concerns or complaints and should have access to clear information on how to voice complaints and concerns.
- will take seriously any concern or complaint and will look into it promptly, for resolution as quickly as possible.
- will ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively.
- will display this policy publicly on its website.
- will keep a register of all complaints, which will be reviewed annually to ensure that complaints are monitored to improve our services.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by a third party, whether justified or not.

An individual may make a complaint if they feel Demos has:

- Failed to provide a service or partnership to an acceptable standard or made a mistake in the way the service was provided.
- Failed to act in a proper way.
- Provided an unfair service.

It is important to establish the difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern is defined as an expression of worry or doubt for which reassurance is sought. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of their developing into formal complaints. If someone is not happy with the response to a concern and/or wants to make a formal complaint the procedure below should be followed.

Constructive feedback on project work does not constitute a complaint.

The procedure

Complaints may be received by any individual, associate and third party and may arrive in many different forms, for example: letter or email; comments on a feedback form; orally from a delegate, speaker, trainer or customer either in person or by phone; or via social media.

However the complaint reaches Demos, the following procedure should be followed:

Stage 1: Record the complaint

Complete Parts 1 and 2 of the Complaint Form (see below, an editable version is saved alongside this policy) and email it to the Head of Operations, or the Director of Research and Participation if the complaint relates to the Head of Operations.

Use the name of the complainant and the date as the file name. Refer all complainants to the complaints procedure on the website, or share this document with them.

Stage 2: Dealing with the complaint

The Head of Operations will assign the complaint to the relevant programme or project lead. This manager will attempt to resolve the complaint in the first instance and complete Part 3 of the Complaint Form.

Stage 3: Reporting complaints

The Head of Operations should be advised of the suggested resolution. The Head of Operations will follow up with the complainant to make sure they are satisfied with the resolution.

Stage 4: Closing the complaint

If the complainant is happy with the resolution, the Head of Operations will close and file the complaint. In the event the complaint is not resolved, the Head of Operations will follow up with the manager involved to find an alternative resolution.

If a complaint remains unresolved after all reasonable steps have been taken, the complainant may escalate the matter to the CEO.

Timescale

Under regular circumstances, the complaint process should be completed within ten working days. If the complaint is complex and cannot be dealt with within this timescale, the complainant will be updated regularly with progression on their complaint.

External Complaint Record Form

To be completed internally

This information should be provided in full for all complaints received by whatever means (including in writing, by email, in person or by phone). Where a field is not applicable, enter N/A.

Please attach copies of any written correspondence to this form when complete and send it to the Head of Operations.

Part 1: Complainant details:	
Name:	
Job title:	
Organisation:	
Phone number:	
Email address:	
Complaint received by:	[staff member name]
Date received:	
Method of submission:	
Part 2: Details of problem	
Please provide full details of the nature of the problem (ensure you include all facts clearly):	
Part 3: Details of problem resolution	
Please detail how we plan to resolve the issue with the complainant:	
Complainant satisfied with resolution:	Yes/No
Completed by:	
Date completed	