



# Complaints Policy

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BOTANIC GARDENS  
EDUCATION NETWORK

BGEN is a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1103482

c/o BGCI  
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## Table of Contents

About this policy.....	3
Objective.....	3
Scope .....	3
Complaints Procedure .....	4
Conditions required to submit a complaint .....	4
1. Raise your complaint informally.....	4
2. Submitting a complaint to us.....	5
Our process: investigating complaints .....	5
Where we uphold your complaint.....	6
Complaints to the Charities Commission .....	6



## About this policy

The Botanic Gardens Education Network (BGEN) is a specialist support network for professional plant and natural world educators. We help our members to connect people and plants in innovative and engaging ways.

BGEN aims to integrate our members into an energetic network of like-minded people. We do this through online events, face to face training and networking events and our informative, topical Annual Conference.

BGEN supports and builds capacity in educators and community engagers in natural and plant science, biodiversity and sustainability, visitor engagement, audience development, evaluation and funding.

## Objective

The objective of our complaints policy is to ensure that each complaint is fully and fairly investigated and resolved, where possible, on behalf of all affected parties. This will uphold our objectives and maintain a high standard of conduct, combat unfair practices, and encourage safety and high standards across BGEN and our members.

We can only deal with complaints that are related to:

- sectors covered within our membership
- organisations or individual members of BGEN. You can check to see whether individuals and companies are BGEN members by using the search facility on our [website](#), or
- the running of any aspect of our organisation (including events and training).

## Scope

We will look at any complaint in conjunction with our Code of Conduct, Constitution and existing policies and procedures. We aim to mediate in any dispute to achieve a satisfactory outcome. Where this cannot be achieved, the process below sets out how complaints can be escalated or appealed.

We have no legal sanction, are not a court of arbitration and have no powers to enforce a settlement. Whilst we will do our best to mediate and resolve a dispute, we cannot enforce one. Our complaints process may not be used as a precursor to litigation: you cannot use our process to take someone to court.

We cannot deal with complaints against non-members.



## Complaints Procedure

Conditions required to submit a complaint

To open a complaint with us, it must:

- be submitted within six months of the incident occurring
- must be against a current member or related to the running of the charity
- include the evidence to enable us to investigate. Your submission should include, where relevant:
  - ✓ all correspondence between yourself and the organisation or individual
  - ✓ the original invoice (if relevant)
  - ✓ photos (if relevant)
  - ✓ any other evidence relevant to the complaint
- if relevant, have been raised directly with the member previously, and an opportunity provided to resolve any issues.

In most cases, we will only be able to liaise with the person or people the complaint affects. It's important to note we can't look at complaints:

- about employment, personnel or most contractual matters
- of a financial nature (including those seeking refunds or compensation)
- where legal proceedings are underway
- based on hearsay, opinion, informal second-opinion or without evidence
- relating to a matter that could reasonably be considered to be frivolous, repetitious or vexatious.

### 1. Raise your complaint informally

Problems between members or trustees can arise because of misunderstandings or a breakdown in communication. You must have attempted to resolve the complaint by direct discussion with the person concerned before formally raising a complaint with us.

- When contacting the person, company or charity, record the dates and the name of the person you speak to if in person or by phone, and maintain email correspondence which should be used as evidence if proceeding to submit a formal complaint
- Where your complaint is related to a member, if you have reached the end of our members' complaint process, inform the member company that you intend to submit a complaint to us if the issue is not resolved.

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Please note that BGEN's ability to investigate is limited to our membership and does not constitute any legal investigation whatsoever. In all instances UK law supersedes all investigations by BGEN.

## 2. Submitting a complaint to us

If your efforts to resolve a grievance directly have failed, we may be able to investigate the matter.

You must submit your formal complaint to us by email: [info@bgen.org.uk](mailto:info@bgen.org.uk)

### Our process: investigating complaints

We aim to complete our investigation and present a resolution within four weeks, depending on whether we have received all information required to review the complaint, and its complexity.

1. Once we have received the complaint, we will acknowledge receipt within five working days and confirm whether we can proceed based on the complaint meets the criteria set out above.
2. The complaint handler will review the complaint and if necessary, request further information.
3. We will contact the member company or individual referred to in the complaint to request their evidence (calls, emails and other relevant information). For us to investigate and mediate your complaint, we require your consent to contact the member or individual referred to in the complaint.
4. The complaint handler will make an assessment of the complaint and what resolution could be achieved.
5. In the event that we cannot resolve your complaint we will, where possible, advise further steps that may be available to you.
6. If appropriate and necessary, we may recommend a formal second opinion from a suitably impartial individual.
7. We will consider the facts and investigate the allegations received. Both the complainant and respondent will be informed, in writing, of our decision and recommendations.
8. If a decision is reached that the complaint has no merit we will inform both parties in writing. If either party does not accept the decision, they have the right to appeal.
9. If we request further information from the complainant, which is not received within two weeks, the complaint will be closed.



10. Any appeal must be made in writing to the Chair of the BGEN Board, unless the appeal relates to the Chair, in which case it should be directed to the Vice Chair or another suitable member of the Board.

The appeal should be submitted within 30 working days of being informed of the decision. If the appeal is considered to have merit, this will then be referred to an Independent Appeals Panel appointed by the Board.

Where your complaint is regarding the Chair, Vice Chair or a member of the Board, your email should be sent to anyone of the other BGEN Trustees. A current list of Trustees can be found on the [Charity Commission website](#).

### Where we uphold your complaint

A genuine effort will be made to deal with your problem and achieve a satisfactory solution. Should your complaint be upheld, this may result in:

- consideration of the complaint by our Board
- recommend corrective actions
- disciplinary procedures including termination of the individual or company's membership of BGEN
- in the case of a complaint against a contractor, our disciplinary procedure may be followed.

We cannot enforce refunds or compensations, even where there is a clear breach of standards. Where this is an outcome sought by the complainant, legal advice would need to be sought.

### Complaints to the Charities Commission

Where you are not satisfied with the outcome following this complaint process, you can raise a complaint with the Charity Commission. Further information is available via the [Charity Commission website](#).