

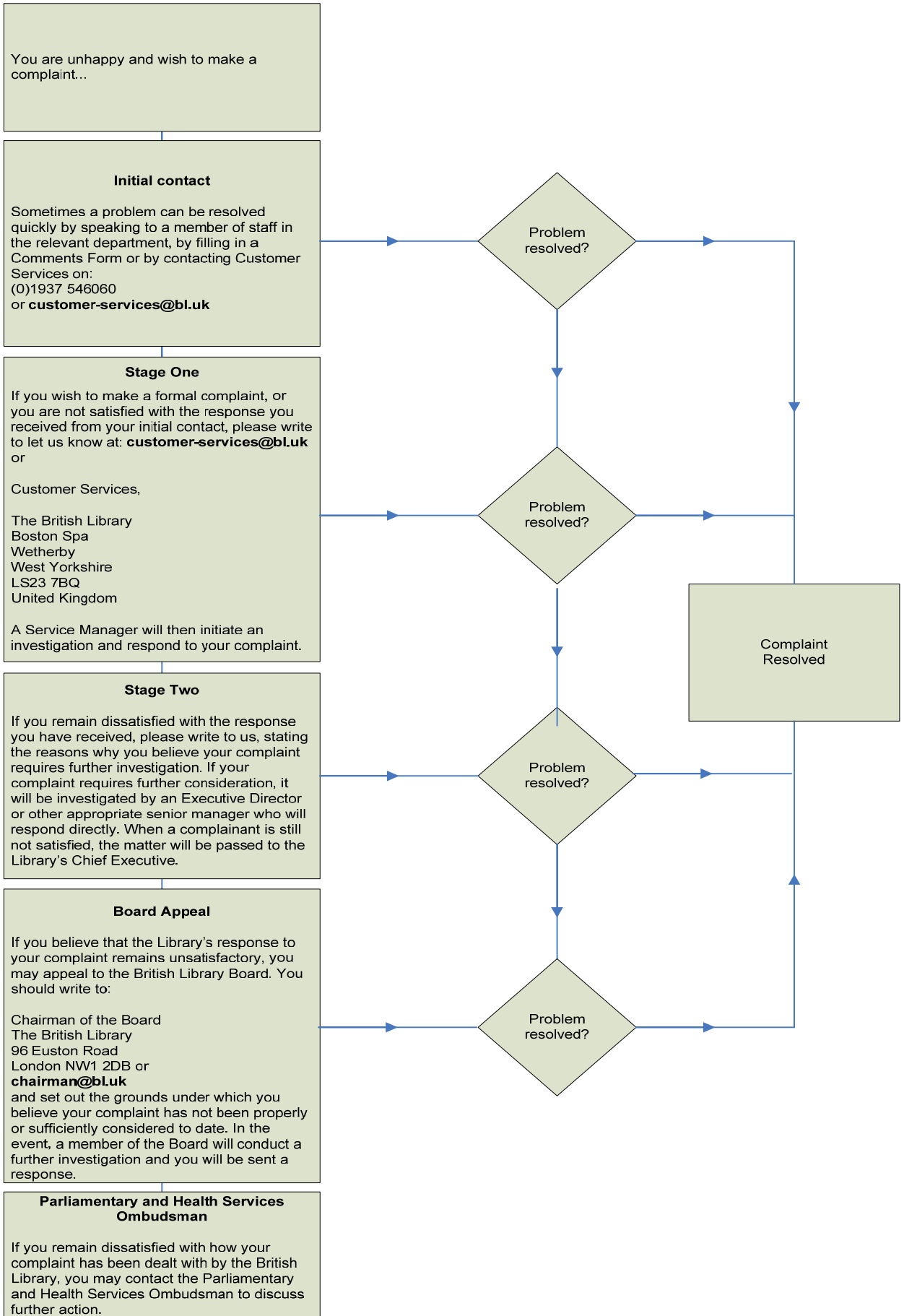
BRITISH LIBRARY COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. The British Library is committed to providing excellent service, and we invite feedback - to ensure the continuous improvement of the services and facilities it provides. However, the Library recognises that sometimes we may not always provide the high level of service to which we aspire.
2. This statement sets out how you can take up any matter you think is unsatisfactory about the service you have received at, or from, the Library.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

3. Sometimes a problem can be resolved simply by speaking to a member of our staff or a manager in the relevant department or by speaking to our Customer Services team. There will though be instances where a formal response is required, and this complaints procedure outlines the stages the Library will go through to seek to resolve your complaint satisfactorily. The diagram below summarises our complaints process.



INITIAL CONTACT

4. Sometimes a problem can be resolved quickly simply by speaking to a member of our staff or a manager in the relevant department or by speaking to our Customer Services team.
5. However, if Customer Services or the department considering the matter believes that a more substantive review will be required in order to respond to the issues raised, your complaint will be considered under the formal complaint procedure (see paragraphs 8 to 23 below).
6. Or if you are not satisfied with the response received or the way in which your complaint is handled you may write formally to Customer Services, who will consider the issues raised in accordance with the formal complaint procedure set out below.
7. Customer Services can be contacted at:

Customer Services
The British Library
Boston Spa
Wetherby
West Yorkshire
LS23 7BQ]

email: customer-feedback@bl.uk

telephone: (0)1937 546060

MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

Stage One

8. If you wish to make a complaint you should write to:

Customer Services
The British Library
Boston Spa
Wetherby
West Yorkshire
LS23 7BQ]

email: customer-feedback@bl.uk

9. Our Customer Services Manager will send you a written acknowledgement of receipt within 10 working days of receiving your complaint.
10. We will appoint a Service Manager to conduct a full investigation into your complaint.
11. The Service Manager will consider your complaint with an open mind, being fair to all parties.
12. The Service Manager's aim will be to achieve resolution of every issue raised within your complaint. If appropriate, a face-to-face meeting may be arranged with you.
13. Wherever possible a response will be sent to you within 20 working days. Where this is not possible, a revised date will be agreed with you.

Stage Two

14. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask for your complaint to be investigated further. You should write to Customer Services at the address above and set out why you are unhappy with the response you have received and why you believe that your complaint needs to be investigated further.
15. If we agree that there are grounds to believe that the complaint has not been properly or sufficiently considered to date, an Executive Director or an other appropriate senior manager will review the matter and commission a second-stage investigation. We will send you a written acknowledgement of receipt within 10 working days of receiving your complaint.
16. Otherwise, the Customer Services Manager will inform you in writing within 10 working days of the decision and will explain why a second-stage investigation is not considered to be appropriate in this case.
17. After completing the second-stage investigation the Director or senior manager will compile a written response to you and arrange for it to be sent to you with an accompanying letter.
18. Wherever possible the second-stage response will be sent within 20 working days of receipt of your complaint. Where this is not possible, a revised date will be agreed with you.
19. When a complainant is still not satisfied, the matter will be passed to the Library's Chief Executive.

Appeal to the British Library Board

20. If you remain dissatisfied after the second-stage response to your complaint, you may request the Chairman of the Board to refer your complaint to the British Library Board for further consideration. You should make such a request in writing and include a full explanation as to why you believe your complaint needs to be investigated further i.e.
 - i. misrepresentation of facts;
 - ii. improper carrying out of investigation;
 - iii. improper consideration given to details of complaint.

21. You should write to:

Chairman of the Board
British Library
96 Euston Road
London
NW1 2DB

Chairman@bl.uk

22. If the Chairman agrees that there are grounds to believe that your complaint has not been properly or sufficiently considered to date you will be notified within 20 working days of receipt of your request.
23. The Chairman will then take appropriate steps to investigate your complaint further and will inform you of the outcome within a further 20 working days. Where this is not possible, a revised date will be agreed with you.
24. If the Chairman decides there are no grounds for further action, his/her letter will explain why no further investigation is considered to be appropriate in this case.

Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman

25. If you are not satisfied with the subsequent reply you have the option of writing to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman can investigate complaints about government departments and agencies in the UK and the NHS in England.

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP

Complaints Helpline Tel: 0345 015 4033

<http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/make-a-complaint>

TIME LIMITS FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS

26. A complaint should be made as soon as possible after the matter giving rise to it and, in any case, within six calendar months of the incident occurring.
27. If you were not aware at the relevant time that there was cause for complaint, your complaint should normally be made as soon as possible after you became aware of it and, in any case, no more than six calendar months after becoming aware.
28. Exceptionally, the Customer Services Manager will have discretion to extend the above time limits where:-
- a. it is considered unreasonable for your complaint to have been made earlier, and
 - b. it is still possible to investigate the matter in question.

THE SCOPE OF THIS COMPLAINTS POLICY

Complaint issues

29. A complaint may be about any matter reasonably connected with the exercise of the Library's functions unless it is about a specific matter that may require resolution by other means, as specified below. These include matters which:-
- a. are of a criminal nature (see paragraph 30-31 below);
 - b. are relating to collection security, fraud or discrimination (see paragraph 30-31 below);
 - c. arise out of the Library's alleged failure to comply with a data subject request under the Data Protection Act 1998 (see paragraph 32 below);
 - d. arise from a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (see paragraph 32 below);
 - e. are about issues in which the Library is taking, or proposes to take, disciplinary proceedings (see paragraph 33-35 below);
 - f. are being, or have been, investigated by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Complaints relating to serious breach of collection security, fraud, discrimination or a serious breach of the Library's Code of Service

30. The Library's complaints procedure is not appropriate for investigating matters of a serious criminal nature (such as accusations of criminal damage, serious breaches of collection security, fraud, discrimination, etc).
31. In such circumstances the Customer Services Manager will immediately refer the matter to the Director of Human Resources to determine the correct course of action, which may involve direct referral to the police or other appropriate authorities.

Freedom of Information and Data Protection Issues

32. Any matters that may be identified within a complaint that refer to either a Freedom of Information request, or a Data Protection issue, will be immediately referred to the Library's Corporate Information Management Unit and/or the Data Protection Manager respectively for handling under our Freedom of Information/Data Protection policy, in line with complaints handling procedures set by the Information Commissioner.

Possible disciplinary proceedings

33. The Library's complaints procedure is concerned only with resolving complaints and not with investigating disciplinary matters.
34. Consideration of whether or not disciplinary action is warranted is a separate matter for management and is subject to a separate process of investigation. However, information gathered during the complaints procedure may be made available for a disciplinary investigation.

35. If disciplinary action arising from the event(s) in question is subsequently taken against a member of staff, the Library is under no obligation to disclose the outcome of those proceedings with you.

PERSISTENT AND VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

36. At times complaints can become vexatious and/or persistent, causing undue stress for staff and resulting in a disproportionate use of the Library's resources.
37. In dealing with such situations the Customer Services Manager will ensure the complaints procedure has been correctly implemented and that no material element of a complaint has been overlooked or inadequately addressed.
38. Where a complaint deemed to be vexatious or persistent is considered to have no basis or genuine substance, the Library reserves the right not to investigate. In this situation, the Library will notify the complainant within 20 working days.

GENERAL POINTS

39. The Library staff will treat all users politely and with respect. In return, staff are not expected to tolerate any behaviour that is of a personal, abusive or threatening nature.
40. Discrimination, in particular on the grounds of religion, gender, race/ethnicity, disability, age or sexual orientation, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
41. Every effort will be made to ensure that the process of handling complaints promotes equal access, by meeting the diverse range of needs of the people who may wish to make a complaint.
42. To ensure the effectiveness of the complaints process and enable staff to understand the complaints procedure, appropriate training will be made available for Library staff.
43. This procedure will be reviewed every two years. In addition, amendments will be made in the intervening period, should aspects of this procedure's effectiveness be found inadequate as a result of the ongoing monitoring, or if inadequacies in its operation are identified at any stage.
44. To facilitate the process of making a complaint, the Library's policy and procedure relating to complaints will be widely publicised internally and externally using a variety of media, including the use of email and the Library's website.
45. The Library will not normally offer financial compensation for errors made or poor service. The Library is a public sector organisation that relies on public funding and donations, and we work hard both to ensure a consistently high level of service and also to resolve any lapse in this standard that you let us know about.