

Complaints about a Big Local area

This document sets out our approach when Local Trust is made aware of issues within a Big Local area via a formal complaint.

Our approach

When Local Trust receives complaints about Big Local in an area our approach is to support those who are directly involved to resolve the issue locally. This is in line with our ethos of community leadership, accountability and control over the delivery of Big Local, as well as our experience and belief that local action leads to better and more lasting positive solutions. We will only consider becoming involved where it is clear that issues cannot be resolved properly at a local level.

Complaints made by those involved in delivering Big Local

When complaints are received from those delivering Big Local in a local area, which includes partnership members, workers or Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs) we will seek to support local resolution of any issues raised. This is likely to include encouraging the partnership or LTO following their own policies and procedures to arrive at a satisfactory outcome.

If you contact us with a complaint about a Big Local area we will therefore, in most instances, suggest that you raise the matter with your Big Local partnership and/or the LTO. We will also share your correspondence with the Big Local Rep, as they act on our behalf in areas and may be able to provide support to resolve issues at a local level.

Supporting conflict resolution

There might be some circumstances where additional support would be helpful in assisting Big Local to resolve a complaint. This will typically be when the complaint relates to disputes or disagreements between individuals or groups within the local area.

When this is the case a member of the programmes team will refer the matter to an external support partner who will contact the relevant parties to set-up phone calls and/or meetings. This could take the form of mediation; an external review; or providing support through an independent chairperson. This may include the person(s) who raised the issues, the Big Local partnership and the LTO.

This process might include telephone and face to face conversations and facilitated meetings with the people involved, ongoing direct support, or a combination of the both. In extreme circumstances where the partnership cannot develop a local solution Local Trust may direct the actions and/or objectives the partnership should work towards.

It is usual for Big Local related activities and decisions to continue while these supporting actions take place. Where this is not appropriate, a member of the programmes team will inform the Big Local partnership and locally trusted organisation.

In extreme circumstances where conflict cannot be resolved and it is of a nature that it threatens the delivery of the local plan, Local Trust may suspend endorsement of the local plan and payment of further funds. This may include circumstances when this appears necessary to safeguard funds and/or to ensure that the partnership continues to have the support of local people.

Where disputes within the partnership continue to put at risk the effective operation of the partnership and/or delivery of the plan due to non-constructive engagement, Local Trust may require the removal of those individuals from the partnership as a condition of renewing its endorsement of the plan and further draw down of funding. In doing so, Local Trust will have regard to the outcome of any mediation process that has taken place and the engagement (or otherwise) of partnership members in that.

Complaints from third parties and members of the public

Where Local Trust receives complaints from third parties or members of the public about a Big Local area, we will in most cases direct them to the Big Local partnership. Third parties include local residents, grant recipients (for example from a community grant scheme), contractors or participants in the projects or programmes being delivered in an area.

We take this approach as we ask and expect partnerships to follow their own agreed policies, processes and procedures for delivering Big Local. These are expected to cover issues such as, but not limited to: conflicts of interest; codes of conduct and behaviour; administration and decision making related to community grant programmes; the structure and membership of partnerships; and partnership working with others in the local area.

Where the issues relate to financial administration and management of Big Local, this falls within the responsibility of the Locally Trusted Organisation in line with our terms and conditions of grant. In most cases the LTO will have its own complaints procedures, which will need to be followed.

Complaints about Reps

If you contact Local Trust with a complaint about a Rep this will normally be reviewed by a member of the senior management team.

Communications identified as 'not for action'

In most instances complaints are made in good faith and reflect a real concern on the part of the individual(s) making them. When it becomes clear the complaints are not made in good

faith we have a process whereby a complaint can be marked 'not for action'. This might be because they are repeat or persistent complaints from the same individual(s), have no substance, have already been reviewed and concluded or are vexatious.

A vexatious complaint may include (but is not limited to):

- refusal to accept or co-operate with the complaints investigation process whilst still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- refusal to accept that issues are not within the remit of the complaints policy and procedures
- refusal to accept that issues are not within the power of Local Trust to investigate, change or influence
- insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure
- an unreasonable number of contacts with Local Trust
- persistent and unreasonable demands or expectation of staff and/or the complaints process
- harassment, verbal abuse or intimidation of staff dealing with the complaint
- raising subsidiary, new or irrelevant issues whilst a complaint is being addressed that were not part of the complaint at the start of the complaint process
- making the same complaint repeatedly

Submitting complaints

If you consider your complaint is one that should be considered by Local Trust, please submit it in writing to info@localtrust.org.uk or by post with the following information:

- your name
- your preferred contact information, including email or postal address details of the concern along with any evidence
- your permission to share your complaint or concerns with those directly involved in Big Local, including the partnership and locally trusted organisation

Please note that if you do not explicitly give us permission to share your complaint we will ask you to confirm that you are happy for this to take place. If you do not give permission for your complaint to be shared then we will not take any action. The only exemption from this is whistleblowing that relates to fraud, in which case you should report it to us and to the police.

We aim to acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two working days and provide a fuller reply, if required, within 20 working days. The timeframe may vary depending on the complexity of the issues raised and exceptionally we may take more time if we need to discuss the matter with other people or organisations involved in the Big Local. We will let you know if that is the case.

Once we have reviewed your complaint, along with associated evidence, and communicated the outcome including any actions to be taken by Local Trust or others, our decision is final.

Local Trust

Email: info@localtrust.org.uk | Website: www.localtrust.org.uk | Telephone: 020 3588 0565
Address: Local Trust, CAN Mezzanine, 7-17 Great Dover Street, London SE10 4YR

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