



# COMPLAINTS HANDLING - POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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## Policy

The purpose of this policy and our procedures for listening to our members, supporters and stakeholders is to manage our relationship with those with whom we engage.

The Arts Society strives to provide an excellent service, we want to find out if things have gone wrong, so we can fix them, immediately where possible, and prevent things going wrong in the future, whilst maintaining a consistent and open service to all our stakeholders.

The Arts Society work should be carried out openly and without hindrance. It is therefore committed to resolving any complaint which may arise in relation to the charity and its activities as soon as reasonably practicable. In the interests of fairness and consistency, The Arts Society therefore seeks to follow the procedures set out below

## General principles

The Arts Society takes all complaints seriously.

A complaint is different from a comment or expression of dissatisfaction. It is a formal claim that The Arts Society has failed to meet a commitment, standard or regulation. We may choose not to respond to complaints or feedback that is abusive, offensive or harasses a member of staff / volunteer.

- In order for complaints to be managed effectively, care will be taken to ensure that all Trustees, staff and volunteers are aware of the procedures for managing complaints and about their role in those procedures.
- The policy and procedures will be easily accessible whenever required. A copy of this document should be held by The Arts Society and will be available on the website [www.theartssociety.org](http://www.theartssociety.org)
- The policy and procedures will be reviewed annually by the Trustee Board.
- Any complaints which are made should be treated as confidential, unless the Trustee Board resolves that it is in the best interests of the charity or a legal obligation to do otherwise

- Complainants will be treated with understanding and respect, as should the person(s), if any, against whom the complaint is made.
- This policy is not intended to cover employment related matters, for which there are specific policies and procedures. An employee may complain using this policy, but it is likely in most cases if the complaint is employment related then policies relating to that will be more appropriate and will be passed to our HR provider.

## **Procedures**

### General

Everyone in The Arts Society will so far as possible work together to ensure that: -

- Any complaint is recognised as a complaint or otherwise
- All staff and Trustees are familiar with this policy
- All those involved in complaints and their management receive support
- The complaints procedure is accessible to those who may want to use it
- Complaints are managed effectively
- The charity benefits by learning from complaints

### To whom should a complaint be addressed?

- Complaints may be made verbally or in writing (including by email). By the Complainant
- In the first instance, complaints must be made to the Company Secretary. The Recipient
- The Company Secretary (or the Trustee Board, when engaged) should consider whether any legal advice should be sought.

## **Timescale**

All complaints should be dealt with promptly and without undue or unnecessary delay.

For the avoidance of doubt, when a complaint is initially received, a written acknowledgement should be given to the complainant as soon as possible, and a more substantive written response should follow within 14 days.

### Action to be taken when a complaint is received

- The Company Secretary should make a full note of the complaint and keep this in the Complaints Register.
- The Recipient should, at their discretion, seek to resolve the complaint within the timescale above.
- The Recipient may, at their discretion, decide the complaint is not of sufficient merit to progress further than an initial response.
- If the matter complained of involves possible criminal activity, it should be referred directly to the police and the Trustee Board should be informed within 24 hours.

- If neither the Complainant or Recipient is not satisfied, the complaint has been satisfactorily resolved, either may refer the matter to the Trustee Board.
- The Trustee Board should consider the matter at their next scheduled meeting or, if the matter merits swifter action, convene a special meeting to consider it.
- If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the Complainant or Recipient / Trustee Board, it may be referred to the Chair.
- The Recipient or the Trustee Board may at any time decide whether the complainant ought to meet with them to discuss the matter or that the matter be dealt with without doing so.

### **Follow up action**

The Trustee Board is responsible for ensuring that: -

- Any follow up action is properly implemented taking due regard to fairness and respect.
- The outcome of the complaints process is conveyed in writing to the Complainant.
- Consideration is given to any lessons learnt and whether it would be appropriate to take any action to avoid a recurrence of the incident that led to the complaint.

Details of the complaint and its outcome are properly noted within the Complaints Register.

*Updated February 2023*