

THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE

COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK PROCEDURE

Date ratified: unknown

Date reviewed: July 2026. Updated to reflect change in RS staff structure – no paid Centre Manager in post.

1. Introduction

1.1 Within the limits of its resources and its constitution THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE is committed to providing the best possible service to its users. It follows from this that individuals and organisations who are unhappy about the service they receive or do not receive should be clear about how to raise their concerns. Furthermore, they should know that the organisation welcomes such critical feedback and will deal with it in a positive way that does not seek to evade the issues raised by the complainant.

1.2 The procedure outlined below aims to provide the necessary clarity as to how complaints will be dealt with. This document details the workings of the procedure as needs to be understood by THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE staff, trustees and volunteers.

1.3 The positive handling of any complaint, however, does not depend solely on having a written procedure. It depends very much on how people who want to raise a complaint are treated, particularly at the first point of contact. Since any staff member, volunteer or any Trustee could be that first point of contact by a complainant, it is necessary for all of us to ensure that we listen carefully, are encouraging and not defensive. For most people raising a complaint is difficult. We should assume that if they have reached the stage of wanting to give voice to it then they probably have something important to say.

1.4 Part one - Critical friend feedback

The first procedure is to be followed when a service user provides critical feedback that is not a formal complaint. This kind of feedback may provide valuable information that can help shape future services and how expectations are communicated.

1.5 Part two – A formal complaint

This procedure outlines how formal complaints will be managed and the escalation levels.

1.6 Part three – A complaint received about a third party voluntary organisation

2. Part one - Critical friend feedback

All of THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE service users, volunteers and stakeholders are to be encouraged to provide critical feedback on THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE services. Feedback might be given verbally or in writing, either way it should be passed to the RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE paid staff or Trustees who will share the information with the relevant people.

3. Part two – A formal complaint

When a Concern is First Raised

People have the right to choose where, when, how and with whom in the organisation they will raise concerns about how they have been treated. Any staff member or trustee who is approached should be aware that the person may have no idea that there is a procedure for handling complaints. The initial response should therefore be:

- i. to listen and clarify the issues at stake without sounding bureaucratic or formal
- ii. explain that THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE does want to hear their views and that in the interests of fair play a procedure has been set up to make sure people's complaints are dealt with properly.
- iii. establish whether or not the person wants to use the procedure (in which case proceed to Stage 1).

It is important to recognise that it is at this stage some concerns or complaints may be resolved. Depending on the gravity of the complaint, it may be that the simple act of listening is satisfaction enough for the complainant. Alternatively, it may be that a basic misunderstanding about what THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE can offer is cleared up. If, having talked through their concern, the person is still unhappy then every encouragement to move to Stage 1 should be given. It is clear, however, that THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE cannot formally take up the complaint if the person does not wish to take it further.

4. Stages of the Complaints Procedure

There are three stages in the complaints procedure, and each complaint should start at the first stage and progress through until it has been resolved. However, Trustees and paid staff together have the discretion to bypass stages if they both consider it warranted.

If any formal complaints are made about paid staff of THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE, the process should start at stage 2, with the Board of Trustees of THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE performing the role normally undertaken by the Paid Staff.

If any formal complaints are made about a trustee of THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE, the process should start at stage 2, with the Chair of THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE performing the role normally undertaken by the Trustee.

If any formal complaints are made about the Chair of THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE, the process should start at stage 2, but with both paid staff and another nominated trustee performing the role normally undertaken by the Chair.

4.1 Stage 1 – Senior staff level

A stage 1 complaint begins as soon as we have received notification of it. The staff member who receives the complaint should immediately notify the Trustees.

The staff member or Trustee has the discretion to refer the investigation of the complaint to another appropriate member of staff, including himself/herself. This will particularly be the case if the complainant perceives the investigating staff member to be inappropriate, or the complaint is about conduct of the person responsible for this stage of the investigation.

The investigating member of staff has responsibility for:

- Investigating the complaint thoroughly
- Responding to the complainant within 10 working days
- Ensuring that an accurate record of the nature and progress of the complaint is kept. This should be in writing and agreed by the complainant.
- Investigating the complaint

Firstly the staff member or Trustee responsible will investigate the complaint. This should involve finding out what happened, why it happened and what can be done now. It can involve talking to staff, looking at files and records, checking whether policies and procedures were followed or were inadequate, and drafting a response to the complainant.

This response should address the points raised by the complaint. It will explain whether or not THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE felt the complaint to be justified or not. Even if was not justified the complaint will still be investigated because the complainant had felt aggrieved. It will detail what investigation was undertaken and the outcome of this. The response should also detail any remedial action to be taken by THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE, and offer an apology where appropriate.

Satisfaction

At each stage in the process, the person responding to the complainant should ask them to state whether or not they are satisfied with the response to their complaint. They should advise the complainant of the next stage in the procedure if they are not satisfied and wish to take the complaint further.

Right to be accompanied

At any stage of making a complaint, an individual has the right to the help of a friend or supporter in making his/her case. In particular this includes the right to be accompanied to any meetings. The investigating member of staff should make sure that the complainant is aware of this right.

4.2 Stage 2 – Paid Staff / Manager Level

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response at stage 1, they should then submit a stage 2 complaint, which will be responded to by the Board.

The complaint should be made in writing to the Board.

The registration of a complaint at this level will be acknowledged by correspondence on the same day.

It will then be the responsibility of the Board to investigate the complaint and respond within ten working days.

The Trustees must inform any staff, volunteers or trustees who are involved in the complaint that the complaint has progressed to stage 2 as soon as possible.

In investigating the complaint and responding to the complainant, the Paid Staff and/or Trustees should consider whether an apology is required, remedial action is necessary, any reprimand or disciplinary action may be necessary against any member of staff, and whether and changes need to be made to THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE's policies, practices and procedures.

4.3 Stage 3 - Complaints Panel

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response at stage 2, they should submit a stage 3 complaint. This should be in writing and addressed to the Trustees of THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE.

A complaints panel will be established, to which the complainant will be invited. The panel should meet within one month of the complaint reaching stage 3.

The complaints panel will consist of three nominated trustees.

If the complainant wishes, they may request that they make their appeal to the Panel in person. They may bring a friend or supporter to help them put their case.

The role of the Trustees is to ensure that the complaint is fully re-investigated and the response is not just a reproduction of previous responses.

When the Panel has discussed the complaint they will respond to the complainant within 7 days.

5. Part three – A complaint received about a third party voluntary organisation

On occasion THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE may receive a complaint about a third party voluntary organisation from a volunteer or partner. Any staff, trustee or volunteer receiving a complaint about another organisation should notify the THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE Trustees and/or paid staff within 48 hours. The THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE Trustees will, in consultation with staff, decide how to respond to the complaint and if any action is required.

The RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE paid staff may decide to suspend providing services to, or stop working with, the third party organisation until satisfied any concerns have been resolved. Should this happen the organisation concerned will be provided with an explanation and offered a meeting to discuss the concerns raised.

6. Monitoring of complaints:

Paid staff of RSAC and Trustees should regularly monitor and report to the Board of THE RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE the number, nature and outcome of any complaints.