

RISING SUN ARTS CENTRE COMPLAINTS POLICY

Date ratified: unknown

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

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This complaints procedure is in respect to what happens if a volunteer has a complaint against the organisation or if a centre user has a complaint about the service we offer. Pages 1 – 5 are notes on procedure and the procedure itself starts on page 6.
- 1.2 The Rising Sun Arts Centre provide services to the public or to advice centres/local groups. Any service provider needs to operate a complaints procedure to ensure that they are alerted to problems, can offer redress for any substantiated complaint and revise practices in response to the feedback received.
- 1.3 Complaints provide the service user with a form of redress if they are not satisfied with the service received. Complaints are useful feedback to the centre about problem areas of service delivery and can help the centre identify issues and improve practices.
- 1.4 Complaints should be viewed as a positive opportunity to think through and address problems. Whilst a complaints procedure should not be the only monitoring that the centre operates it is nevertheless an important indicator of what the users think of the service.

2. WHAT MATTERS FALL UNDER THE POLICY

- 2.1 The complaints procedure relates to service delivery and complaints are likely to be about the following:

- Discrimination
- Members of the public unhappy with events and/or services
- Customer service
- Formal complaints

3. WHAT MATTERS DO NOT FALL UNDER THE POLICY

- 3.1 This procedure only relates to the services the centre has a responsibility for. So, if a free workshop is held at the premises and the facilitators of this are not associated with the centre then any complaint about the session will be directed at the session organisers not at the centre.
- 3.2 The complaints procedure deals with formal complaints. Some users of the service may wish to draw a matter to your attention but will not want to formally complain.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

- 4.1 The ultimate responsibility for enforcement of this policy lies with RSAC management and Board of Trustees.

Different stages in your procedure?

It is good practice to have several stages in a complaints procedure so that Complainants can take their complaints to a higher level if initially dissatisfied.

For the centre, it is useful to involve different people at different stages so that they take a fresh look at the complaint - though this will involve you keeping those people involved at a latter stage away from the early stages of the complaint. It also provides a number of opportunities to resolve the issue.

The procedure becomes more formal as you go through each stage:

- The first informal stage will usually be dealt with by paid Staff unless the complaint relates to a senior staff member.
- The second stage could involve a Management Committee member/Trustee.
- The third stage will involve a panel of committee members not previously involved and at this stage you can include an external person acting independently.

Who decides whether the complaint is justified and what action should be taken?

First step - identify any potential conflicts of interest:

- If the complaint concerns a member of staff or the Management Committee you will need to limit the number of staff dealing with the complaint to ensure a degree of confidentiality.
- A complaint may sometimes identify potential misconduct by a member of staff that would be dealt with via the disciplinary procedure. Keep the disciplinary and complaints procedure separate - but also remember that the a volunteer is entitled to make a complaint independent of whether or not disciplinary action is appropriate.
- If the complaint involves another party, such as a partner organisation or the local authority, you should make sure that no-one connected with either organisation takes any part in considering the complaint.

Make an initial assessment of how potentially serious the complaint is:

If it is likely to lead to a professional indemnity claim ensure that the complaints procedure is not activated and that you follow the guidance provided with this briefing.

If the complaint is likely to lead to a financial claim, either covered by insurance - such as public liability or against the centre's funds, you should seek initial advice from your insurance company and alert the Management Committee.

Even in the most obvious of cases the person dealing with the complaint may find it useful to test out their response with other people such as a member of the Management Committee.

You may think you would benefit from advice from an external body.

To action the complaint you will need to decide the following:

- Who will read through the papers?
- Who needs to interview any staff who may have relevant knowledge?

- Who will see the complainant?
- Who will be involved in the decision making?
- How the complaint will be registered?

What should the decision cover?

- Whether or not the complaint is justified
- The reasons of the person(s) dealing with the complaint
- The redress which will be offered to the complainant eg. apology, additional help, compensation.
- What action should be taken to avoid the same problem reoccurring.

These decisions should be recorded in writing.

The Management Committee should receive reports which monitor the number of complaints and how they are dealt with.

Time Limits

You will find it useful to set time limits for each stage of the complaints procedure. This will provide the centre with target times for completing investigations at the various stages and informing the complainant of the outcome.

Where to go when the procedure is exhausted

There may be instances where the user is not satisfied with your response and every stage of the complaints procedure has been exhausted.

You can create the right to a review conducted by an independent body. The centre will need to make arrangements for someone not connected to the centre to act as final arbitrator.

This final review should be confined to reviewing the process and the decision of an independent arbitrator is final.

- Establishing that the complaints procedure operated by the centre has been followed.
- Ensuring that the complaint has been dealt with fairly.

Rights for the Complainant

Ensuring that the complainant is able to participate in the process starts with how you publicise your complaints procedure:

- You should display posters informing users of their right to complain and how to do so.

- There should be written guidance on how to make a complaint.
- A complainant should be given the right to have support or assistance from a friend. You should consider providing assistance - from someone outside of the organisation for users who may experience difficulty with the procedure in the absence of the user being accompanied.

Ensure that any time limits you set ensure that the user receives prompt acknowledgement of their complaint and receives a written decision once the process is completed which gives reasons and says what further steps the complainant can take if s/he is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint.



A checklist of what a complaints procedure needs to contain

Does the procedure ensure that:

- ☐ You display posters/leaflets describing the procedure in appropriate formats/languages?
- ☐ Complainants have the choice of complaining in writing, in person, or by telephone?
- ☐ Complainants are clearly told who to make the complaint to?
- ☐ You set a time limit for acknowledging the complaint?
- ☐ Assistance (outside of the centre) is offered to complainants?
- ☐ If the complaint is against a worker or Management Committee member, they will not be included in the investigation process (other than to give their side of events)?
- ☐ The investigation is described?
- ☐ There are several stages to the process and that the final panel are not involved in earlier stages?
- ☐ Complainants are clearly informed about the outcome of the investigation?
- ☐ You tell Complainants how they can take the matter further if they are not happy with the outcome?
- ☐ There is provision for final arbitration?
- ☐ There is a central record of all complaints?
- ☐ Complaints are monitored and analysed at regular intervals by staff or Management Committee?
- ☐ All staff and Management Committee members are made aware of the procedure through induction, supervision and training?
- ☐ There is a named individual responsible for regularly reviewing this procedure?
- ☐ The date of when this procedure was written or last reviewed?

Rising Sun Arts Centre Complaints Procedure

1. STATEMENT

We aim to provide service of a standard acceptable to all our users.

If we fail to do this we want to know about it. This will enable us not only deal with the specific problem, but also avoid it happening again.

Our complaints procedure sets out how to take up matters you think are unsatisfactory about the service you have received from us. Ask the receptionist for a leaflet/ Ask the adviser who sees you for a leaflet/ Please take a leaflet/ If you would rather talk to someone about the complaints procedure please ask the receptionist/ adviser who sees you.

2. INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the procedures we will follow when we receive a complaint from users of the service, an organisation or member of the public. It does not address complaints made by staff or volunteers (dealt with through grievance and disciplinary procedures) nor job applicants (recruitment procedure).

This procedure is meant to provide a means to resolve a dispute between the centre and any complainant. It requires staff and management committee members at every stage to resolve the complaint. Complaints are likely to be in one or more of the following areas:

- *dissatisfaction with our service,*
- *disputes between user and the organisation regarding policy, procedures or activities.*
- *discourtesy or unhelpfulness on the part of staff.*

3. THE PROCEDURE

When someone wishes to register a complaint, the following procedure should be adopted. Where the complaint is against the Paid Staff, the same procedure will be followed, but with the Chair of the Trustees substituting for the Paid Staff's role at all stages.

The complaint should be received either via completion of a complaints form or by a request to make a verbal complaint.

Stage 1

The complainant should be invited to speak to the member of staff dealing with complaints or the Trustees to discuss the complaint with them. This can be done in person or by phone, whichever is appropriate. The staff member should keep a record of the conversation on the complaints monitoring sheet. The staff member will endeavour to resolve the matter.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, or where it is not possible to use Stage 1 above (for example if it is not convenient for them to phone or visit the office) then refer to Stage 2 below.

Time limit for Stage 1.

Stage 1 should be completed within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.

Stage 2

The complainant should be asked to put their complaint in writing to the paid staff member, marked Private and Confidential, providing as much detail of the complaint as possible.

If the complainant is not able to put their complaint in writing the complainant will be offered an interview with the paid staff member or Trustee. The role of the staff member at this meeting will be confined to putting the complaints in writing, obtain the complainants approval for the contents of this, and ask the complainant to sign to indicate they agree with the contents. The complainant may choose to work with a third party at this stage and throughout the process - the centre should provide a list of potential advocates if the complainant does not have a resource they can turn to.

The staff member will then investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it.

The Staff Member may delegate any aspect of the investigation to a nominee.

If the complaint involves a member(s) of staff the Trustees should offer the opportunity for the member of staff to put forward their account, either by written statement or by presentation to the Panel.

Time limit for Stage 2.

Paid staff will ensure that all complainants receive a response in writing within 10 working days of the letter/complaint notes being received. This letter will summarise what investigation have been carried out and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter. A copy of this letter should be attached to the complaints form.

If a response by letter is unsuitable, the complainant will be offered an interview with the staff member to provide the response verbally. This meeting should be held within 10 working days as before. A written record of this interview will be kept and signed by the complainant.

If the complainant is not satisfied at this stage they should ask for the matter to be dealt with under Stage 3 of the complaints procedure.

Stage 3

Where the matter is not resolved by stage 2, the staff member should immediately refer the complaint to the Board of Trustees, sending copies of all written correspondence to Trustees.

The complainant will be informed immediately by the Trustee that this is being done and that the Panel will also be contacting the staff member (s) against whom the complaint is made.

The panel will review the decision made at Stage 3 and may seek further clarification from any of the parties involved.

Time limit for Stage 3.

The Complaints Panel will notify the complainant of its reasons and decision within 15 working days of having received notice of the complaint. The Panels decision will be final. The Trustee responsible for ensuring records of the meeting are kept and the Complaints monitoring form is completed.

One Trustee will be responsible for reporting the Panel's findings to the next meeting of the Borad of Trustees.

RECORDING AND MONITORING COMPLAINTS

All complaints will be recorded and kept on file, including those, which were resolved without being put in writing. The Complaints monitoring form shall be used to do this. All complaints shall be treated with regard to the Confidentiality policy.

The Trustees and/or paid staff will make a report once a year to the Management Committee summarising the nature of complaints received and how they were resolved.

PUBLICISING THE PROCEDURE

Paid Staff and trustees are responsible for ensuring that posters and leaflets are displayed at the centre welcoming complaints from users and the posters and leaflets clearly explain the procedure for making the complaint.

ENSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROCEDURE.

All Trustees and paid staff members will receive a copy of the complaints procedure.

Existing and new workers will be introduced to the complaints procedure via induction and training. The procedure will be reviewed annually and amendments should be proposed and agreed by the Trustees.

Date procedure was agreed: _____

Date of review: _____

Person responsible for review: _____

Complaint Form

If you wish to complain about The Rising Sun Arts Centre please fill in the following and return the form to us.

Please tell us the details of your complaint

Please tell us what you feel should/should not have happened.

Please tell us what you would like us to do now.

Your name _____ Your telephone no. _____

Your address: _____

Is it all right to contact you here? yes/no

Thank you for completing this form. You will receive a response in ____ days.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – RECORD	
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Complaint Medium

[illegible]

