



Policy – RA5

Complaints Policy

Rationale Arts

RCN: 1181681

Written by: Dr Caroline Mawer



1. Introduction

This policy details how we deal with any complaints: whether they are about service provision; when we have a theatrical or other production; about staff or volunteers; or about fundraising or other management activities.

We define complaints as any expression of dissatisfaction or concern, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action. We regard such communications as **valuable sources of learning and improvement**, so we treat them all as an opportunity to improve.

We understand our responsibility to investigate and resolve complaints **fairly, proportionately and without undue delay**.

Always, we actively listen to complainants to understand their complaint(s) and the outcome(s) they are seeking.

If it is possible to immediately resolve the issue(s), we will do this.

If immediate resolution is not possible, the formal policies here will be immediately activated.

2. Process

A named lead for the complaint will be allocated, depending on the specific circumstances.

We try to ensure that complaints are investigated by someone within Rationale Arts who is independent of the events complained about. Where this is not possible, we will consider whether a third party outside of Rationale Arts should be asked to investigate the complaint.

Communicating with the complainant

We will acknowledge receipt of a complaint / activation of the formal complaints policy within 72 hours:

- telling the complainant who the specific lead is for their complaint;
- and sharing written information about the process and timescales that will be followed.

Caroline Mawer is usually the complaints lead.

Duty of care to our staff and volunteers

We appreciate our duty of care to our staff and volunteers so, except for in the most exceptional circumstances, members of staff or volunteers will be informed within 72 hours if a complaint has been made about them or actions for which they were responsible:

- Staff and volunteers always have the opportunity to respond to allegations - we will actively listen to their view of what may or may not have happened;



- In the same way as for the complainants, members of staff or volunteers will be told who the specific lead is for the complaint, and be given written information about the process and timescales that will be followed.

Investigating complaints fairly and thoroughly

We take responsibility for the actions of our staff and any others acting on behalf of Rationale Arts. When responding to complaints or other concerns, staff members and volunteers must be respectful and acknowledge the experience of the complainant, whether the complaint is justified or not:

- Staff members or volunteers should start by please taking a slow deep breath. And listening.
- Details of any and all complaints are recorded on the Improvement Opportunity form

Staff members or volunteers will have been trained on what is on the form - so they can listen rather than starting by filling in forms.

But **formal/written** permission is needed to record the complainants contact details - to ensure Rationale Arts continues to be UK GDPR compliant.

Reaching decisions

We will provide clear, evidence-based reasons for our decisions and ensure those decisions are proportionate, appropriate and fair:

- So we will respond explicitly to all the substantive points raised by a complainant and explain why Rationale Arts considers the points are justified or not.
- When responding to a complaint, Rationale Arts will acknowledge if things have gone wrong and take proportionate action to put things right, including apologising where appropriate.
- This will also include telling the complainant about the lessons learnt and any changes made to services, guidance or policy as a result of the complaint.

We aim to agree final outcomes within 4 weeks:

- In very exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible to meet the 4-week time scales. If that is the case, the lead person will ensure the complainant is kept up to date and has the reasons for any delay / the updated timetable.
- If we are unable to resolve the complaint, we will signpost complainants to the Charity Commission.



Learning from complaints

We keep a GDPR compliant record of any complaints, the outcomes of investigations and the reasons for decisions. This is part of our policy to utilise complaints as a source of learning and improvement. In reviewing complaints, Rationale Arts will always consider what lessons can be learnt and how we can improve our services; performances; staff and volunteer handling and the experience of donors:

- As this is a new policy, the Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees will review all complaints, and the operation of the complaints policy in 3 months - reporting on the number and nature of complaints received and the outcome of those complaints, including whether they have led to a change in services, policies or procedures.
- After that, there will be at minimum a six-monthly review of complaints, to identify any trends or wider learning.

Date of Change:	Changed By:	Comments:
15/02/2022		Policy approved by the Trustees at Board Meeting.