

Blackheath Conservatoire

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

This policy is designed to inform customers, parents and staff of Blackheath Conservatoire of the procedures for dealing with complaints. This policy and procedure will be relied upon in respect of all complaints by customers, learners and parents except in respect of Child protection allegations. These are covered by a separate Safeguarding Policy, and all staff should be aware of, and bound by, the processes and stipulations of this procedure.

For staff, this policy should be read in conjunction with the staff Code of Conduct, which sets out in details the Conservatoire's expectations and regulations relating to the standard of conduct and behaviour we expect of all teaching and support staff.

The Conservatoire expects that the majority of concerns can be resolved informally and we will use all reasonable endeavours to resolve any complaints that are made informally, or any concerns that are raised, on that basis.

If informal channels fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaints procedure about any matter other than a child protection allegation, must be given in writing to the Executive Director and will be dealt with under this Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Aims

- Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response
- We will do all we can to resolve your concern and to ensure you are happy with the experience you and/or your child receives at the Conservatoire
- All complaints and expressions of concern will be treated seriously and confidentially. Once a complaint is in process, confidentiality is deemed binding on all parties to that complaint. This is to protect all those involved while the issues are resolved.
- Correspondence, statements and records will remain confidential, except in so far as any legal obligation prevails

Procedures and practice

Our complaints procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- Be easily accessible and publicised
- Be simple to understand and use
- Be impartial
- Be non-adversarial
- Allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of progress
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- Respect all parties' desire for confidentiality
- Address the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- Provide information to the Conservatoire's senior management team and Trustees so that services can be improved

Stage one – informal resolution

1. It is expected that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally
2. If customers, students or parents have a complaint, they should contact the Conservatoire. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the complainant's satisfaction. If this does not resolve the matter, the Executive Director will be informed.
3. Complaints at this stage will be assessed by the Executive Director to ascertain who within the organisation is best placed to deal with the complaint. The Executive Director will in most cases refer the complaint to a member of the senior management team unless he/she deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally
4. The appointed person will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received (see annex A). These records will be kept for one year after the customer, student or child ceases to be an active member of the Conservatoire
5. An overall record of complaints will be maintained by the Executive Director for monitoring, reporting and quality assurance purposes. All complaints that fall under the informal or formal resolution procedures will be recorded in this record.
6. The Conservatoire will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal complaints within ten working days of them being raised, except where they are raised out of main term times, when the Conservatoire will use all reasonable endeavours to resolve them as soon as possible.
7. Should the matter not be resolved as referred to in paragraph 5 above, or in the event that the appointed person and the complainant or complainant's representative (parent/guardian) fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, the complainant or their representative will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this Procedure.
8. All parties involved in the complaint (including any member of staff who is a subject of a complaint) will be kept fully informed of the progress and outcomes of the complaint, and supported as appropriate during and subsequent to, the process.

Stage Two – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in paragraphs five and six of stage one above), then the complainant or their representative should put their complaint in writing to the Conservatoire's Executive Director. They should also identify how they wish the complaint to be resolved.

1. The Executive Director will delegate responsibility for undertaking the investigation to a member of the Senior Management Team (known as the Investigating Officer) unless he/she deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
2. The Executive Director will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
3. In most cases, the Investigating Officer will meet or speak with the complainant to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
4. The Investigating Officer will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet the complainant within ten working days of the formal complaint being received, except where the complaint is received out of normal term times, when the Investigating Officer will use his/her reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet the complainant as soon as possible.
5. The Executive Director will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, whether undertaken by him/her, or by an appointed Investigating Officer from the senior management team.
6. Once the Executive Director is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Complainants will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision. At his/her

discretion, the Executive Director may also arrange to meet the complainant and other parties (particularly any members of Conservatoire staff who were subjects of complaints), to explain the decision and respond in writing.

9. The Conservatoire will keep a written record of all formal complaints including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and the Conservatoire's decision, a record of which will be kept for one year after the customer, student or child ceases to be an active member of the Conservatoire. This record will state if complaints were resolved at the preliminary hearing or if they were taken to the full complaints procedure.
7. Where complainants are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Conservatoire's response to their formal complaint, they have the opportunity to have the evidence considered afresh by a Complaints Panel comprised of three Conservatoire Trustees.

Stage Three – Panel Consideration

If complainants, or anyone party to a complaint, seek to invoke Stage Three following failure to reach an earlier resolution and where dissatisfied by the Conservatoire's decision in respect of their formal complaint, the complainant may, in writing addressed to the Chair of Trustees, request that their complaint is further considered by a Trustees Panel.

1. This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this Procedure, be known as a 're-consideration'.
2. Complainants must lodge their request for re-consideration in writing within ten days of the date of the original decision made in accordance with the Stage Two procedure. The complainant must provide a list of their complaint(s) which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage Two procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each.
3. The Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in this initial submission
4. The Chair of Trustees or his/her nominee will acknowledge the request for re-consideration within five working days, and inform the complainant of the steps involved in the Complaints Procedure.
5. The Chair of Trustees or his/her nominee will convene a Panel meeting as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty working days after receipt of the request for re-consideration.
6. The Panel will consider the evidence to ascertain whether the complaint was dealt with appropriately in line with the stipulations and procedures set out in this document. Where the Panel considers it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the Panel meeting. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:
 - Documents to support the complaint(s)
 - Chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s), and/or
 - Written submission setting out the complaint(s) in more detail

This evidence will be considered by the Panel along with the initial submission that was lodged by the complainant. It should be noted that the function of the Panel is to re-consider the evidence available and whether the Conservatoire's policies and procedures were adhered to in the course of the investigation.

Although in some circumstances, the Panel may decide to speak in person to the complainant or others, this process is a re-consideration of extant information or clarification of the evidence, and not an opportunity to re-examine the complaint in its entirety. There is therefore no automatic right to speak or appear before the Panel. Such a decision is at the discretion of the Panel.

Procedure relating to the Re-consideration Panel

1. Evidence will be sent to the Chair of the Panel, who will then circulate documentation to all parties including the Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written evidence must be received no later than ten working days in advance of the Panel hearing.
2. It is for the Panel to decide how to conduct the proceedings of the re-consideration. Wherever possible, the Panel will come to a decision on the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is deemed necessary, the Panel will decide how this is to be carried out.
3. After due consideration of the facts, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten working days of the Panel meeting. The decision reached by this Panel is final.
4. The Panel's findings will be sent by the Chair of Trustees in writing to the complainant, the Conservatoire, and, where appropriate, the person complained of.
5. The Conservatoire will keep a record of all appeals, decisions and recommendations of the Re-consideration Panel, which record will be kept for one year after the customer, student or child ceases to be an active member of the Conservatoire

Concluding notes

Monitoring and evaluation

The Board of Trustees will review this policy every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the Conservatoire.

Other documents and Appendices

Appendix A: Complaint Form

Appendix B: Flowchart

Appendix A: Complaint Form

<p>Complainant's name: Student/customer name (if different): Complainant's relationship to student/customer (if different):</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Postcode:</p> <p>Daytime tel: Evening tel:</p> <p>Please give details of your complaint: <i>(include dates, people involved, any witnesses, etc.)</i></p> <p>What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (who did you speak to and what was the response?)</p>
<p>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</p> <p>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Office use: <i>Safeguarding concern raised?:</i> <i>Date acknowledgement sent:</i> <i>By who:</i> <i>Complaint referred to:</i> <i>Date:</i></p>

Please complete this form and return it to the Executive Director, who will acknowledge receipt and send a copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure. This document outlines the next steps that will be taken.

Appendix B:
Complaints
flow-chart

Complaint received

To be resolved within ten working days, either informally or by a member of the Conservatoire team

Issue resolved

No further action required

Issue not resolved

Reported to ED in writing

Stage Two

Acknowledge receipt of complaint and holding meeting (if necessary) within 10 working days. Letter with decision sent within 10 working days

Issue resolved

No further action required

Issue not resolved

Request for Re-Consideration Panel lodged within 10 working days of receipt of decision

Child Protection concern

If the matter is considered a potential CP matter, refer immediately to the DCPO or Deputy DCPO.

Child Protection protocols are then immediately invoked if appropriate.

This process may run alongside a wider complaints process.

Re-consideration Panel request received

Chair of Trustees issues letter to parents within five working days
Panel meeting convened (usually within 20 days of receipt)
Evidence distributed to all five working days before meeting

Re-consideration Panel meets

Decision made within ten days of Panel meeting
Letter sent to all parties confirming Panel decision