



Complaints Procedure

Statement of Policy

Henley Choral Society (HCS) (including Henley Youth Choir (HYC)), views dealing appropriately with complaints as an opportunity to maintain good relationships, to learn and improve for the future and to put things right for the person or people that have made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint;
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint;
- To make sure everyone in HCS knows what to do if a complaint is received;
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way;
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired and maintained;
- To carry out an annual review of complaints received and their outcomes; and
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of HCS.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in HCS. A complaint may be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Trustees of HCS.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on:.....

Last reviewed:.....

Complaints Procedure

Interrelationship with HYC Child Safeguarding Policy

Complaints in the form of allegations made against staff, volunteers or against another child under HYC's Child Safeguarding Policy should be dealt with in accordance with that policy using the guidelines and procedures as set out by the Safe Network: C6 Complaints Policy and Procedure. All other complaints shall be dealt with in accordance with this procedure.

Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to Henley Choral Society at 14, Milton Close, Henley on Thames RG9 1UJ or by e-mail to any officer or trustee of HCS.
[Contact details are on the HCS website]

Verbal complaints may be made in person to any officer or trustee at any of our events or activities, or by phone.

Members of HCS may send written complaints or make verbal complaints to their voice representative.

HYC participants and their parents/carers may send written complaints or make verbal complaints to any member of the HYC committee.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Written or verbal complaints received by someone other than an officer, a trustee, a voice representative or a member of the HYC committee should be referred to an appropriate officer, trustee, voice rep or member of the HYC committee as soon as possible.

Verbal complaints, received by telephone or in person, need to be recorded by whoever receives the complaint.

The person who receives a complaint by phone or in person should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint;
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number;
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to HCS (for example: member, parent of HYC member, third party);
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words;
- Where appropriate, tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure; and explain what will happen next and how long it will take.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see **Appendix 1**

Resolving Complaints

Investigation and Resolution

The officer, trustee, voice representative or member of HYC committee receiving the complaint should make every effort to understand the nature of the complaint and to reach a satisfactory resolution, both for the complainant and for HCS.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Vice Chair as soon as possible or at most within one week.

On receiving the complaint information, the Vice Chair records it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, he or she delegates an appropriate person to investigate the complaint and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed by the Vice Chair and given a fair opportunity to respond.

The complainant should receive acknowledgement of their complaint by the Vice Chair within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent to the complainant with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Copies of all documentation relating to the complaint should be forwarded to the Chair.

Appeals

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at stage one, they can submit an appeal to the Chair of Trustees.

This request for an appeal should be acknowledged as soon as possible or at most within a week of receiving it.

The Chair will investigate the facts of the original complaint, review the documentation, and speak with the person who investigated the complaint and agree the action taken.

It will normally be appropriate for at least one other trustee or HCS member to be involved in dealing with an appeal.

Ideally a complainant should receive a definitive reply to the appeal within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent to the complainant with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, the result of the appeal and any action taken as a result of the complaint and appeal.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Trustees may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have heard
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of HCS, e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of HCS, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met, if that is the case
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the complaints procedure
- Note down the substance of the complaint and how you responded as soon as possible