# PHOENIX THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE

# COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

**Registered charity number:** 1166858
**Policy approved by:** Board of Trustees
**Date approved:** 27 November 2026
**Review date:** 27 November 2028
**Policy owner:** Chief Executive Officer/ Chair of Trustees

## 1. Purpose of this policy

The Phoenix Theatre & Arts Centre is committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive and positive experience for everyone who engages with our organisation.

We recognise that, from time to time, things may go wrong or people may feel dissatisfied with the services, facilities, activities or conduct of the organisation. We welcome feedback and take complaints seriously, viewing them as an opportunity to learn, improve and maintain public confidence in our charity.

This policy sets out how individuals can raise a complaint, how we will respond and how complaints can be escalated if someone is dissatisfied with the outcome.

We aim to handle all complaints fairly, consistently, sensitively and within reasonable timescales.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints relating to the activities and operations of [Name of Arts Centre], including:

- The standard of service provided by the arts centre.
- The behaviour or conduct of staff, volunteers, trustees or people representing the organisation.
- Workshops, classes, exhibitions, performances and other events.
- The use, hire and accessibility of our buildings and facilities.
- Ticketing, bookings, cancellations and customer service.
- Communication, administration and organisational decisions.
- Relationships with artists, participants, audiences, hirers and other stakeholders.
- Fundraising activities and the way donations are solicited or handled.
- Any other aspect of the charity's activities or conduct.

This policy applies to complaints made by members of the public, visitors, audiences, participants, artists, workshop leaders, hirers, donors, volunteers and other people who engage with the organisation.

**3. Our principles**

When handling complaints, we will:

- **Be accessible:** Make it straightforward for anyone to raise a concern or complaint, including people who may need additional support.
- **Be fair:** Treat everyone involved with courtesy, respect and impartiality.
- **Be proportionate:** Recognise that we are a small charity and ensure our approach is appropriate to the nature and seriousness of the complaint.
- **Be timely:** Acknowledge and respond to complaints as promptly as possible.
- **Be confidential:** Handle information sensitively and share it only with those who need it to investigate or resolve the complaint, subject to legal and safeguarding obligations.
- **Be transparent:** Explain our decisions and the reasons for them.
- **Learn and improve:** Use complaints to identify areas where our organisation, services or procedures could be improved.

No individual will be treated unfairly or disadvantaged because they have raised a complaint in good faith.

**4. What is a complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether made verbally or in writing, about something the arts centre has done, has failed to do, or the way in which someone has been treated.

We encourage people to raise concerns as soon as possible. Where appropriate, a minor issue may be resolved informally through a conversation with a member of staff.

However, anyone wishing to make a formal complaint is entitled to do so without first attempting informal resolution.

**5. How to make a complaint**

Complaints can be made in any of the following ways:

**In person:** Speak to a member of staff or the Centre Manager.

**By email:** to the Centre's email address

**By post:** to the venue

**By telephone:** 01420 472664

We ask that complaints include, where possible:

- The nature of the complaint.
- What happened and when.
- Who was involved, if known.
- The impact the situation has had.
- What outcome or resolution the complainant would like.

We understand that not everyone will be comfortable making a written complaint. We will make reasonable efforts to support people who need assistance to communicate their concerns.

Complaints may be made by someone acting on behalf of another individual, provided appropriate consent is obtained where necessary.

Anonymous complaints will be considered where sufficient information is available, although it may not always be possible to investigate fully or provide a response.

**6. How we will handle complaints**

We aim to resolve complaints as quickly and informally as possible, where appropriate. More serious or complex complaints will be handled through a formal process.

**Stage 1 – Acknowledgement and initial response**

The complaint will be passed to the Centre Manager or the appropriate person responsible for handling complaints.

We aim to acknowledge formal complaints within five working days of receiving them.

The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint has been received and explain who will be dealing with it and the expected timescale for a response.

Where possible, the Centre Manager will seek to resolve straightforward complaints directly.

**Stage 2 – Investigation**

Where a complaint cannot be resolved immediately, an appropriate investigation will be undertaken.

This may involve:

- Speaking with the complainant to clarify the issues.
- Speaking with relevant staff, volunteers or other individuals involved.
- Reviewing relevant correspondence, records or documentation.
- Considering any relevant policies, procedures or agreements.
- Reviewing the circumstances and impact of the incident.

The person investigating the complaint should not be directly involved in the matter being complained about.

Where the complaint concerns the Centre Manager, the complaint will normally be referred to the Chair of Trustees.

Where the complaint concerns a trustee, the matter will be referred to the Chair of Trustees or another suitably independent trustee. Where the complaint concerns the Chair, it will be referred to another trustee who has no conflict of interest.

**Stage 3 – Formal response**

We aim to provide a full written response within 20 working days of receiving the complaint.

If the investigation requires more time, we will inform the complainant, explain the reason for the delay and provide an indication of when a response can be expected.

Our response will:

- Summarise the complaint and the issues investigated.
- Explain the findings and our decision.
- Identify any action we intend to take.
- Offer an apology where appropriate.
- Explain how the complainant can request a further review if they remain dissatisfied.

The outcome may include:

- An explanation or clarification.
- An apology.
- Corrective action to address the issue.
- A change to a procedure or service.
- Additional staff or volunteer training.

- Other appropriate remedial action.

We will explain where we are unable to uphold a complaint and provide reasons for our decision.

**7. If someone remains dissatisfied**

If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of Stage 3, they may request a review by writing to the Chair of Trustees within 20 working days of receiving the formal response.

The request should explain why the complainant remains dissatisfied and, where possible, identify any aspects of the investigation or outcome they believe have not been adequately addressed.

The Chair of Trustees, or another trustee who has not previously been involved in the complaint, will review the matter.

The review will consider whether:

- The complaint was investigated fairly and appropriately.
- Relevant information was considered.
- The decision was reasonable and supported by the available evidence.
- The proposed resolution was appropriate.

The trustee undertaking the review may request further information or arrange additional enquiries where necessary.

We aim to provide a final response within 20 working days of receiving the review request. If more time is required, the complainant will be kept informed.

The outcome of this review will be the charity's final internal decision.

**8. Complaints involving safeguarding or serious concerns**

Some complaints may raise issues that require an immediate response outside the normal complaints procedure.

These include concerns about:

- The safety or welfare of children or adults at risk.
- Abuse, harassment, bullying or discrimination.
- Allegations of serious misconduct.
- Criminal activity or threats of harm.
- Serious breaches of trust or misuse of charitable funds.

Such matters will be referred to the appropriate person under the charity's Safeguarding Policy, Whistleblowing Policy or other relevant procedure.

Where necessary, concerns will be referred to the relevant statutory authorities or regulatory bodies.

A safeguarding concern will not be delayed while the ordinary complaints procedure is followed.

The charity will also consider whether a serious incident report to the Charity Commission is required.

**9. Data protection and confidentiality**

Information relating to complaints will be handled in accordance with the charity's Data Protection Policy and applicable data protection legislation.

Complaint records will be stored securely and access will be restricted to those who need the information to manage, investigate or oversee the complaint.

We will only share information where there is an appropriate reason to do so, including where required by law or necessary to protect someone from harm.

Individuals who raise concerns about the charity's handling of their personal data may also exercise their data protection rights through the charity's data protection complaints process.

**10. Unreasonable or persistent complaints**

We recognise that making a complaint can be stressful and that individuals may feel strongly about the issues they raise.

We will always seek to treat complainants respectfully and consider their concerns seriously.

However, in exceptional circumstances, we may need to take proportionate steps to manage behaviour that is abusive, threatening, harassing or persistently unreasonable.

This may include:

- Agreeing a single point of contact.
- Restricting communication to a particular method.
- Setting reasonable limits on the frequency of communication.
- Ending direct communication where behaviour is abusive or threatening.

Any such decision will be made carefully, will not prevent legitimate concerns from being considered and will be kept under review.

**11. Recording and monitoring complaints**

The Centre Manager, or another person appointed by the trustees, will maintain a confidential record of formal complaints.

Records will include:

- The date the complaint was received.
- The nature of the complaint.
- The individuals or activities involved, where relevant.
- The steps taken to investigate.
- The outcome and any action taken.
- The date the complaint was closed.

The trustees will receive periodic updates on complaints, including their nature, outcomes and any recurring themes.

Complaints will be reviewed to identify opportunities for improvement and to help ensure the charity is accountable, transparent and responsive to the people it serves.

Records will be retained in accordance with the charity's data retention arrangements.

**12. External organisations and regulators**

We hope that complaints can be resolved directly with the arts centre. However, individuals may also have the right to raise concerns with an appropriate external organisation.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, these may include:

- **Charity Commission for England and Wales:** For serious concerns about the charity's governance, administration, misuse of funds or failure to meet its legal obligations.
  www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity
- **Fundraising Regulator:** For complaints about charitable fundraising that cannot be resolved directly with the charity.
  www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk
- **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):** For concerns about the handling of personal information.
  www.ico.org.uk

- **Equality Advisory Support Service:** For advice about discrimination and equality rights.
  www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

The Charity Commission does not act as an appeal body for individual complaints about the standard of service provided by a charity.

**13. Review of this policy**

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years by the Board of Trustees, or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, regulatory guidance or the charity's activities.

The trustees are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented, communicated and accessible to everyone who engages with the arts centre.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees on:** 27 November 2026

**Signed on behalf of the Board:** Eric Clifford

**Name:** Eric Clifford

**Position:** Chair of Trustees

**Next review date:** 27 November 2028