



Complaints Policy

This policy tells you how to make a complaint as a member or participant of the Cobweb Orchestra, and as a contractor or worker for the Cobweb Orchestra.

This is the policy that we will follow if you are making a complaint that someone's conduct or behaviour has been unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive or intimidating.

- This does not take the place of normal social interactions between members/participants, and if possible, disagreements are best resolved directly and informally, with the person concerned. When you bring a formal complaint to us, we will usually ask what informal steps have already been taken to resolve the issue.
- Suggestions for improvements on how the groups and the overall Cobweb organisation operate can be made to the relevant group leader, or to any of the trustees.
- If you have a complaint about how the organisation operates, which is at a similar level of seriousness to that outlined in paragraph 2 (for example, you believe the organisation to be breaking Equality or Safeguarding procedures) we would also use this formal complaints procedure.

Values and Principles

You have the right to complain: we take complaints seriously. You should not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage because of making a complaint.

- **Fairness:** we believe that complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint should be made aware of the nature of the complaint and have a chance to contribute and respond to any allegation or investigation.
- **Equality:** you should receive a proper response to your complaint, regardless of your age, gender, disability, race, religion, nationality, social status, sexual orientation or political persuasion.
- **Safety and welfare** take priority: we will always give priority to concerns that affect safety and welfare. Issues affecting children will be treated particularly seriously.
- **Confidentiality:** we treat complaints as confidentially as possible. Sometimes we have to seek advice and discuss complaints with other organisations. If we are

worried about a risk to a person or to the public, we might need to pass on our concerns to the right authorities. If necessary, we will get advice from other organisations such as the Police or Social Services.

1. How to make a complaint

Complaints will be handled by the trustees.

You should make your complaint in writing to the Safeguarding and Complaints trustee (contact details at the bottom of this policy) unless the complaint involves this trustee, in which case the complaint should go to the Chair of the trustees.

Your written complaint should say:

1. What happened and when
2. Who was involved
3. The names of any witnesses to the event/situation
4. What you would like to see as an outcome.

2. What will we do to investigate?

We will aim to give an initial response to your complaint within two weeks. If the matter is urgent, we will respond more quickly. We will investigate your complaint fairly, and this will usually be done by a trustee on the HR group, who will be chosen to do this by the Safeguarding and Complaints trustee or the Chair of trustees.

Investigating means that we will discuss the complaint with all of the relevant people. We will try to gather any information that may be relevant to handling your complaint.

In general we will want to show copies of information from the investigation to the person complained about, to allow them to respond. This is because we believe in fairness and openness. We will not share information if we think that this will endanger someone's safety or welfare, and if we believe a law may have been broken, we will involve the Police.

3. How will I know what is happening?

You will be given the details of the person who is investigating your complaint. That person will make sure that you understand the process, and will help to answer any questions or concerns that you have. You will be given regular updates on the progress of your complaint. If there are delays in handling your complaint for any reason, we will keep you informed. If your complaint leads to formal action against someone, we will usually inform you about the outcome. We will not tell you the outcome if that person is a child, or if we believe that telling you would create a risk to other people. In this situation, we will still try to tell you about what impact our decisions will have on you.

4. What are the possible outcomes or results of my complaint?

In many cases, we are able to resolve problems informally, by mutual agreement. This might include:

- a) a change in arrangements for particular activities.
- b) a explanation or apology.
- c) a agreement to communicate or act differently in future.

If an informal resolution is not suitable or possible, then a small panel from the trustees' HR subgroup will look at the information about the case. We will try to make sure that this committee does not contain anyone directly involved with your complaint. They might decide to take the following action:

- a) action against a member or participant, which could include a warning about future conduct or, in an extremely serious case, a ban on attending Cobweb orchestra events or rehearsals*
- b) disciplinary action against a member of staff.
- c) changes in contracts or arrangements.
- d) a decision to refer the case to another organisation such as the Police, or Social Services.
- e) closure of your complaint without action.

It is in the interests of the Cobweb organisation and its members and participants, that complaints are dealt with and brought to closure as quickly as possible, consistent with proper process. The Trustees have therefore delegated authority to deal with complaints to the HR sub-committee, and the decision of this group is final.

5. Is there anyone else I can talk to?

Sometimes it can be useful to speak directly to someone outside the orchestra, for example if:

- You need urgent advice about someone's safety or welfare.
- Your complaint is very serious, ie it involves a law being broken

The most suitable people to contact, in the situations above, will usually be the Police.

* See the Articles of Association, section 1.4.4

The current Safeguarding and Complaints trustee is:

Judith Derry-Greene. email, judith.greene@cobweborchestra.org.uk or by post to Judith Derry-Greene, c/o Cobweb Office, Hawkrigg, 89 Gilesgate, Durham DH1 1HY

The current Chair of trustees is:

Michael Cave email michael.cave@cobweborchestra.org.uk , or by post to M Cave c/o Cobweb Office, Hawkrigg, 89 Gilesgate, Durham DH1 1HY

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Policy last approved by Trustees: