

FYC Complaints Policy and Procedures

Introduction

Farnham Youth Choir ('FYC') views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve, as well as a chance to put things right for the person who has made the complaint. Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact FYC to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at FYC knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and relationships repaired
- To gather information which helps FYC to improve what it does

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that arises from FYC's perceived failure to meet expectations. Complaints may come from any individual, volunteer or organisation with a legitimate interest in FYC, including the general public if something is perceived to be improper.

This policy does **not** cover:

- complaints from FYC staff, who should refer to FYC's Chair or any other Trustee. A list of FYC's Trustees can be found on the website of the Charity Commission: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5024922/trustees>;
- **concerns regarding child protection or safeguarding. These must instead be raised under FYC's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures; or**
- **complaints arising from musical/artistic decisions taken by FYC's music team. As an example, the music team's decision regarding which singers will perform solo pieces is final.**

Confidentiality

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

Contact Details for Complaints

FYC wants to make it easy for people to provide feedback or make a complaint. There are three ways to get in touch with FYC:

- Face to face: if a complainant is dealing with a member of staff or a member of the music

team and wishes to make a complaint about something said or done by that person, the complainant should speak to that member of staff or member of the music team directly. It may be possible to resolve the issue immediately, but if that is not possible, the member of staff or member of the music team concerned will record the details of the complaint and send it through to FYC's Operations Manager.

- Other verbal complaints may be made in person to FYC's Operations Manager or by phone to 07836 595585.
- Written complaints may be sent to FYC by email at info@fyc.org.uk.

It would be helpful to FYC for recording and monitoring purposes if in submitting your complaint the complaint form at the Annex to this document could be completed, both to support an initial face-to-face contact or phone contact, or as the initial contact through the email address given above.

Comments made by individuals in a social media context (such a Twitter or Facebook) will NOT be treated as complaints for the purposes of this policy. For a complaint to be handled under this policy, it must be received via one of the routes described here.

FYC Complaints Procedures – how FYC will handle a complaint

Receiving Complaints

This paragraph describes the role of the individual within the FYC community receiving the initial complaint. Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded, preferably in the format of the standard complaints form attached as the Annex to this document. The person who receives a phone or in-person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address, email address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to FYC (e.g. donor, volunteer, member's parent/carer)
- Tell the complainant that FYC has a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

Resolving Complaints

FYC will address each complaint in a sensitive, fair, transparent, professional and unbiased manner. FYC will work from the premise that any person is entitled to express their view on what FYC does and that views should be taken seriously where this is warranted.

FYC will not, however, tolerate confrontational, hostile or abusive language/behaviour towards any of its staff, volunteers or members, and may decline to investigate a complaint (or discontinue an investigation) in such circumstances. FYC also has the right to refuse to accept a complaint where the complaint is vexatious, malicious or motivated by racist, sexist, homophobic or other discriminatory attitudes. The decision as to whether a complaint falls into any of these categories

will be taken by FYC's Chair of Trustees, in conjunction with the Committee where necessary. Any complaints refused for this reason will be reported and minuted at the next Trustees' meeting.

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue about which the complaint is being made. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to FYC's Operations Manager within three working days.

On receiving the complaint, if not already resolved, FYC's Operations Manager will confer with the Chair of FYC's Trustees, who will delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within eight working days of the date when the complaint was first made. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible (because for example an investigation has not been fully completed within that time) the complainant should be given an indication of when a full reply can be expected.

Whether the complaint is found to be justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and (subject to the overriding need to maintain the confidentiality of any individual concerned) any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed by FYC's Trustees, and the Trustees will consider whether a review should proceed. The complainant should be specific about which aspects of the original complaint in particular have not been answered to their satisfaction. Stage Two will consider only those specific matters and will not reopen all lines of enquiry. No new matters may be added to the complaint at this stage: any new matters arising must be treated as a separate new complaint.

The request for review by the Trustees should be acknowledged within ten working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say when the complainant can expect a reply.

A Stage Two review will not automatically be carried out. The Trustees will first consider whether the necessary facts were established in Stage One and if there were any gaps in the process carried out. The Trustees will also consider whether there is, for example, simply a difference of opinion between the complainant and the FYC team member, and whether further investigation and review will reveal any new facts which could change opinions. If it is concluded that all facts have been considered and that there is no reasonable possibility of new facts emerging in a Stage Two review, the Trustees will decline the request for further review. If this is the case, the complainant will be

informed of why the decision has been made to decline the Stage Two review.

Should the Trustees accept the view that a review is required, they may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitable person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month of referral to the Trustees. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed or a scheduled Trustees' meeting does not fall within that time frame, the complainant should be informed of the date 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, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless FYC's Trustees decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External Stage

As FYC is a registered charity, the complainant can complain to the Charity Commission. Information about the kind of complaints that can be considered by the Charity Commission can be found on their website at <http://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>.

Variation of the Complaints Procedures

FYC's Trustees may vary these complaints procedures for good reason. This may be necessary, for instance, to avoid a conflict of interest. For example, if a complaint has been made about a named Trustee, that same Trustee would not be involved in leading a Stage Two review.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Any complaints received during the course of an academic year will collectively be reviewed by the Trustees at the end of that year in order to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action and/or to review the FYC Complaints Policy and Procedures. This will include a review of the achievement of the timescales specified in the FYC Complaints Policy and Procedures for the handling of any complaints.



Annex: Complaint recording form

Name of the person making the complaint ('the complainant'):

Complaint submitted on (date):

If you are not the complainant but are recording a complaint made by someone else, please give your name (in capitals):

Complaint made (please delete as appropriate): in person / by telephone / by email

Please explain the nature of the complaint:

Where and when did this happen:

The names of anyone involved (if known):

Please state the outcome sought, i.e. what would resolve the complaint from the complainant's point of view (N.B. FYC is not obliged to resolve the complaint in this way):

Contact details of the complainant (name, daytime telephone number and email address):
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