

Sansara Choir: Complaints Policy

29.11.22

Aims and Ethos

If parents, carers, audience members, members of the public or individuals using Sansara's ("the Choir") services have a concern, we would like to hear about it. We will endeavour to deal with concerns promptly and fairly. All concerns will be dealt with seriously, and we aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Expectations of Sansara

Those who raise an informal or formal concern or complaint can expect the Choir to:

- respect confidentiality at all times,
- respond with courtesy and respect,
- respond within a reasonable time,
- be available for consultation within reasonable time limits,
- attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the choir's policies,
- keep the complainant informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised,
- communicate the existence of this policy.

The Choir's Expectations

The Choir can expect those who wish to raise problems with the Choir to:

- respect confidentiality at all times,
- treat all Choir staff with courtesy and respect,
- respect the needs and well-being of those using the Choir's services,
- avoid any aggression, verbal abuse or threats,
- recognise the time constraints under which members of Choir staff work and allow the Choir a reasonable time to respond,
- understand that the Choir has a complaints procedure which it must follow.

Procedure

Step 1

Most concerns and complaints are resolved quickly and informally by speaking with a staff member. Staff are happy to explain the Choir's practices, policies, and how they affect those

using its services. If in doubt, please keep asking until you are completely satisfied as all staff are eager to help. The staff member will make sure that he/she/they understand what the complainant feels went wrong and they will also explain their actions.

Step 2

If complainants are dissatisfied with the staff member's response they can raise their concerns with the Artistic Director, Tom Herring (tom@sansarachoir.com) in writing or by making an appointment to discuss the issue. The Artistic Director will investigate the complaint and may interview those involved. The complainant will then receive a response.

The Choir would expect that most complaints be resolved at this stage.

Step 3

Should a complainant be unhappy with the Artistic Director's response to the complaint, or have a complaint about the Artistic Director, he/she/they should contact the Chair of Trustees, who is obliged to investigate the complaint. The Chair of Trustees will do all he/she/they can to resolve the issue informally through a dialogue with all parties, but if a complainant is unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined below. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come around to complainant's point of view, but it will help those involved to understand all sides of the question; it may also help to prevent a similar thing arising again.

- A formal complaint must be made in writing to the Chair of Trustees, Charles Graham (charlessomersetgraham@gmail.com) stating the nature of the complaint and why they are unhappy with the way the Choir has handled it so far.
- The Chair of Trustees (or designate) should normally acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days, clarify where necessary and give a target date for providing a response. This would normally be within 15 working days.
- The Chair (or designate) will undertake an investigation of the matter, normally involving inviting the complainant to a meeting to discuss the issue. The complainant should be given reasonable notice of the meeting and be entitled to be accompanied by a friend.

Gathering information in relation to the complaint, by interviewing members of staff, witnesses, taking and/or reviewing statements etc. involves keeping appropriate written notes of all of the above.

The purpose of the Chair's investigation will normally be to assess whether or not the initial complaint was handled appropriately and/or whether appropriate procedures were followed and actions were taken.

The Chair (or designate) will communicate the conclusion of their investigation in writing to the complainant and provide the complainant with the option of a review by the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body.

Step 4

Review by the Complaints Panel of the Trustees

If the complainant is not happy with response of the Chair of Trustees, they may write to the Company Secretary of the Trustees explaining clearly on what grounds they are unhappy and request that the complaint be considered by the Complaints Panel of the Trustees.

Review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.

Complaints Panel

Any review of the process followed will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the Trustees, chosen from a pool of Trustees and those deemed to be of sufficient experience and understanding appointed by the Trustees. Panel members should not include:

- the Chair
- the Trustee who dealt with the complaint in Stage 3 (normally the Chair)
- staff governors except in exceptional circumstances

Time scales

- The complainant's letter should normally be acknowledged and Trustee Panel informed within 5 working days of receipt.
- The Panel sets a date to meet as soon as reasonably practical and usually within 15 working days of the acknowledgement date of the letter.
- Trustees Panel obtains reports from the Designated Trustee, complainants, Chair of Trustees and any further information/documentation required within 5 working days before the meeting.
- The Trustees Body Panel will communicate their findings to all parties concerned within 10 working days.

The decision of the Panel is final and the matter will then be closed as far as the Choir is concerned.

Anonymous complaints

Complaints that are made anonymously will be handled at the discretion of the Choir and may be considered using other procedures, depending on the nature of the complaint.