

# The Crescent Arts Centre

## Complaints Policy

<b>Version</b>	<b>V2</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>September 2018</b>
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## **2. Introduction**

THE CRESCENT recognises the importance of feedback including any complaints that participants, audience members, tutors, or other stakeholders might have about any aspect of the service provided. Complaints, compliments and suggestions are all viewed positively as a means of being able to improve services. This policy describes the principles of complaints handling to be followed and to ensure THE CRESCENT complaints are managed appropriately, thereby leading to greater satisfaction and service quality improvement.

THE CRESCENT has a clear and open complaints resolution process that is accessible to all customers, participants, audience members, tutors and other stakeholders. The aim is to resolve any problems raised by providing a timely, open and honest response, following a thorough investigation of the concerns raised. Complaints will be dealt with promptly and efficiently, whilst treating the complainant courteously and sympathetically. Any person who complains will not be adversely affected by having made a complaint.

THE CRESCENT will seek to learn lessons from complaints to ensure the quality of services is improved. The process for handling of complaints and for learning from them will be monitored on a regular basis by the Board of Trustees.

## **3. Scope**

Complaints can be made by all customers, participants, audience members, tutors and other stakeholders who use or are directly affected by THE CRESCENT.

## **4. Duties and Responsibilities**

### **4.1 The Board of THE CRESCENT**

The Board has overall responsibility for ensuring that THE CRESCENT has the necessary policy and procedure in place to enable the effective management of the complaints. This includes monitoring that the procedures are effective and being followed by reviewing complaints reports on a regular basis. The Board will also act as the final arbiter in the review of complaints.

#### **4.2 The Chief Executive of THE CRESCENT is responsible for the**

- the day to day administration of the complaints handling process;
- appointing complaint investigator;
- providing support, advice and guidance on the resolution of complaints;
- monitoring the procedures to ensure that they are effective and being followed;
- recording all written complaints in central complaint register;
- ensuring appropriate learning is incorporated in THE CRESCENT's service improvement processes;
- identifying any trends from complaints data collated; and
- providing an annual complaints report to the board.

#### **4.3 The staff of THE CRESCENT are responsible for**

- providing customers, participants, audience members, tutors and other stakeholders with good customer service;
- treating complainants in a non-judgmental and respectful manner;
- recording complaints including the nature of the complaint, who or what aspect of the service it relates to and the full name and contact details of the complainant;
- reporting complaints received to the CEO as soon as they are received;
- Not victimising complainants
- take on board the learning from complaints to improve customer service

### **5. Education and Training**

THE CRESCENT is committed to ensuring that all staff members have the necessary skills required to handle, investigate, and resolve complaints. Staff members will receive appropriate training.

### **6. Principles of THE CRESCENT Complaints Handling Policy**

THE CRESCENT's management of complaints will adhere to the following principles, including:

- Getting it right
- Being customer focused

- Being open and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Seeking continuous improvement

### **6.1 Definition of a complaint**

Any verbal or written expression of concern in relation to THE CRESCENT from customers, participants, audience members, tutors or other stakeholders or third party authorised on their behalf. Most complaints can be dealt with informally, by addressing the concern quickly and effectively. Clarification should be sought from the complainant if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Complaints may be received in the following ways:

- in person
- in writing
- by telephone
- by e-mail
- through social media
- by another third party
- informally through conversation.

Regardless of the way a complaint is received, all complaints will be investigated thoroughly.

### **6.2 Time Limits for making a complaint**

Normally a complaint should be made as soon as possible or at least within six months from the incident or episode that caused the concern. Where a complaint is made after the expiry of this period, the complaint may be investigated if the CEO or the line Manager is of the opinion that

- Having regard to all the circumstances, the complainant had good reason for not making the complaint within the time period, e.g. severe distress or trauma.

- Notwithstanding the time that has elapsed, it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and efficiently.

The discretion to vary the time limit should be used flexibly and with sensitivity, whilst remaining fair to staff members.

### **6.3 Timescales for handling complaints**

All complaints will be acknowledged.

A full response will be provided following a thorough investigation. This response will be provided by the CEO within 20 working days of receipt of the original complaint. If records from a third party are required and cannot be obtained within this time frame, an update to the client will be provided every three weeks.

### **6.4 Complaints Advice**

The complaints process will be clear and accessible to all customers, participants, audience members, tutors and other stakeholders, and offer a safe and personal approach to achieving resolution. The aim is to address any concerns at a local level. Information leaflets explaining THE CRESCENT's complaints procedure and how to make a complaint will be visibly available at Reception and on request.

### **6.5 Confidentiality**

Staff members must comply with confidentiality and Data Protection obligations when disclosing information during the complaint process. Complaints may often be received from a third party. In these instances, appropriate consent must be obtained. All complaints records will be safe and securely stored to preserve confidentiality.

### **6.6 Record Keeping**

The CEO will record all complaints received in a central register. All documentation relating to a complaint should be retained for ten years after the last entry in the record.

## **6.7 Reporting**

All complaints will be collated and reported on a monthly basis to the Staff Team Meeting. At corporate level, all complaints will be collated and analysed to identify any relevant trends across the organisation's activities. This will be reported on a regular basis to the Board.

## **7. Responding to Complaints**

When a complaint is received, it will be responded to as follows:

### **7.1 Complaints made by telephone or in person**

Complaints made in person or by telephone will be referred to the relevant line manager. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint directly at the office by face-to-face or telephone contact. If this is not possible, complainants have the option to put their complaint in writing for investigation.

### **7.2 Complaints made by Third Parties**

THE CRESCENT will ensure that complaints made by third parties on someone's behalf, are verified and consent will be sought from the subject of the complaint to investigate, ensuring confidentiality.

### **7.3 Written complaints**

Written complaints will be acknowledged and investigated to determine the root causes. Where issues are identified, action plans will be put in place to address these and ensure learning.

Written complaints will be responded to within 20 working days. If there is any delay in meeting this timescale, the complainant will be advised at the earliest opportunity and informed of the revised deadline for the response.

### **7.4 Legal action**

Where legal action is threatened or implied, or it is considered that the complaint has potential legal implications, THE CRESCENT's legal advisers will be advised by the CEO of receipt of the complaint. If legal action is instigated or notification received that the complainant intends to do

so, the complaints procedure should be stopped, with the complainant and any person identified in the complaint advised appropriately in writing.

### **7.5 Solicitor's letters**

Solicitor's letters will be forwarded to the CEO, acknowledged within 2 working days, and all information gathered in the complaints process transferred to THE CRESCENT's legal advisor.

### **7.6 Unresolved complaints**

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the response from THE CRESCENT, they have the right to appeal to the CEO (where they were not involved in the original investigation) and the Chair of the Board (where they were) within four weeks. If the complainant remains unhappy or this stage is not available to them then the complainant can appeal to a panel of the Board who are independent of the original investigation. Findings of these final stage reviews will be shared with the CEO and the staff and action plans developed, implemented, and monitored to address these.

## **8. Monitoring Process**

This policy is valid for 3 years from the date of issue. It will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains valid and is evidenced-based.

It will be monitored to ensure effective implementation in the following ways:

Objective	Monitoring method	Frequency of Monitoring	Responsible Person	Receiving person
Number of complaints received	Monthly analysis of complaints	Monthly	CEO	CEO
Trends Identified	Analysis of all complaints data	Quarterly	CEO	Board
% complaints acknowledged and resolved within timeframe	Analysis of all complaints data	Quarterly	CEO	Board
% complaints resolved with learning within timeframe	Analysis of all complaints data	Quarterly	CEO	Board
% Complaints resolved at final stage	Analysis of all complaints data	Annually	CEO	Board

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## Complaints Procedure

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## **Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Procedure**

Crescent Arts Centre aims to provide a high level of service. To help us achieve this we welcome feedback from the people who use our and provide our services and programmes. Complaints, compliments and suggestions are all viewed positively as a means of being able to improve services and programmes. Our primary focus is on putting problems right where the service has failed.

### **Who can use the complaints procedure?**

Anyone using or directly affected by our services may make a complaint. This includes customers, participants, audience members, tutors and other stakeholders; and people applying to participate in our programme or attend events, and contractors. We will also accept complaints made by a person acting on behalf of a complainant with their approval.

### **How can I make a complaint?**

If you think we have failed to provide a service or that we have provided a poor service, we really need to know so we can take action to put things right. We can often resolve problems straight away, but if we cannot put it right for you quickly, we will address the problem as a formal complaint.

You can make a complaint by phone, in writing or in person. We will log your complaint and confirm this in writing.

### **Complaint Investigation**

When we receive a complaint, one of our staff will take responsibility for investigating and resolving your complaint, and will be the point of contact for you. If you are complaining about a member of staff, then another member staff will be appointed. They may contact you to discuss and understand the problem. After investigating your complaint, they will contact you again to agree what can be done to put things right, and agree a timescale for completion of actions.

Depending on the reasons for your complaint, some elements may take quite a while to resolve, so we will inform you of how long we think that might take. The complaint investigator will investigate your complaint and respond in writing within 20 working days of us receiving your complaint.

The complaint investigator will keep in touch until the agreed actions have been completed. If you think that further actions should be taken, you can discuss this with them. When all actions are complete, we will contact you to close the complaint.

Sometimes we will be unable to resolve your complaint in the way that you initially ask, because we have to follow legal rules and our policies. If this is the case, we will explain the reasons why and discuss alternative approaches.

We may deal with a complaint differently if the individual circumstances require it. For example, we may take a different approach where this supports a customer's communication needs or preferences. We will always aim to be fair, reasonable and impartial.

### **Review of your complaint**

The aim of our complaints procedure is for the complaint investigator to resolve complaints in partnership with customers, participants, audience members, tutors and other stakeholders through clear communication and agreeing actions.

If you feel that we have been unfair or not resolved your complaint, you can ask for a review in writing. It is important to be specific about what you think has been unfair, and what you would like us to do to put things right.

The CEO will look at your complaint and contact you to discuss the outstanding issues. It may be possible to resolve your complaint without the need for a Board Panel Review meeting, for example by arranging other actions to put things right.

If the complaint is still unresolved, at a Board Panel Review meeting, you can present your complaint to an independent panel of our Board of Trustees. You may bring someone along to the meeting to support you. The panel will consider whether the complaint has been handled correctly and may make recommendations for resolving your complaint.

The Board Panel Review is the final part of our internal complaints procedure.

We reserve the right to refuse a Board Panel Review in certain circumstances. For example, if we have completed the actions we have agreed to put things right, or if the resolution sought by the customer is outside our ability to change or deliver (e.g. if the programme or service was provided by someone who simply hired space from the Crescent). If we refuse your request for a Board Panel Review meeting, the CEO will explain his or her reasons for doing so. We will always be fair and reasonable when dealing with your request.

### **Independent Advice**

We encourage you to get independent support or advice on any matter that worries you. There are various organisations you can approach to discuss matters with, and some of these are listed below

Age NI: 0808 808 7575

Citizen's Advice Bureau: 028 9023 1120

Appendix 2

THE CRESCENT Complaints Register 2016

Full Name	Address	Telephone Number	Nature of Complaint	Reported to	Investigated by	Outcome	Learning/Action	Closed Y/N
e.g. Veronica White	13 Cheeryhill Ave, Belfast BT99 0NS	08777 267 453	A room booked by an organisation was double-booked and unavailable when they arrived	RMcC	WM	They were offered and accepted free use of the room on another occasion to suit them	All bookings to be logged on the booking system and checked each week	Y