



Adur & Worthing Trust Complaints Policy

Our Commitment to You

At Adur and Worthing Trust, we are dedicated to providing excellent service and a positive experience for everyone who engages with our work in the arts. While we strive to meet people's expectations, we understand that concerns may occasionally arise. This policy outlines our commitment to handling any complaints fairly, transparently, and respectfully.

We will take all reasonable steps to resolve your concern in everyone's best interests. For very serious concerns, such as an individual's safety being placed at immediate risk, we will take immediate and appropriate action, which may include contacting the emergency services.

1. Informal Complaints

We encourage anyone with a concern to raise it with a member of our team at the time it occurs. This allows us to understand the issue and seek to resolve it quickly and directly.

If we are unable to resolve your concern to your satisfaction, we will make a note of the following information:

- The complainant's name and contact details (unless you wish to remain anonymous).
- The nature of your concern and what you would like to be done about it.
- The circumstances surrounding the complaint, including the date, time, and location, and details of anyone else who was present or involved.
- Any action that was taken by our team.

We will then advise you that your concern will be passed to the trustees for their attention.

2. Formal Complaints

If you wish to make a formal complaint, you should put your concerns in writing. This can be done by email to the nominated lead trustee for complaints or by post to our registered address. All correspondence should be marked '**Private and Confidential**'.

To help us resolve the complaint as quickly and effectively as possible, please include:

- Your name, organisation (if relevant), address, telephone number, and email. If you prefer not to be contacted in a particular way, please let us know.
- As much information as possible, such as what happened, where, when (date/time), and who was present.
- A clear explanation of what you found unsatisfactory.
- What you believe should be done to address your concern.

Acknowledgement and Investigation:

- We will acknowledge receipt of your formal complaint within **7 working days**.
- The complaint will then be thoroughly investigated. Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought.
- If we need further information or clarification, the lead trustee will contact you to request this.
- A response will be sent within **14 working days**. If a full response is not possible within this timeframe, we will send a holding reply explaining the reason for the delay and when we estimate the investigation will be completed.

Our Response:

Our response will explain our findings and what action we have taken or will be taking. Please note that due to the Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR), we may not be able to disclose sensitive personal information about other individuals.

3. The Appeals Process

If you are not satisfied with the response to your formal complaint, you may appeal the decision by writing to the Chair of the Board. The Chair's contact details will be included in our formal complaint response.

- Appeals must be submitted within **28 days** of our response.
- Your appeal should clearly state why you believe the original decision was wrong, providing any new facts or information necessary to demonstrate this.
- A final decision will be notified within **28 days** of receiving your appeal. This decision is final.

External Escalation:

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you have the right to raise a concern with the **Charity Commission for England and Wales** if you believe the charity has acted improperly. You can find more information on their website.

4. Safeguarding Concerns

This complaints policy is **not** the primary procedure for handling safeguarding concerns. If your complaint relates to the safety or welfare of a child or an adult at risk, it will be handled under our dedicated Safeguarding Policy.

In such cases, your concern will be immediately escalated to our designated safeguarding lead, and where appropriate, we will report the matter to the local authority's social care services and the police. In these circumstances, the need to protect an individual's safety will take precedence over confidentiality.

5. Wider Action & Learning

Irrespective of the outcome of any complaint, we will consider if there is any requirement for wider action or statutory reporting to external bodies such as the Charity Commission, the Health and Safety Executive, or the Police.

We will also review our own policies, procedures, and training to see if any changes can be made to prevent a similar issue from arising in the future.

6. Anonymous Complaints

We will record and investigate any facts available from anonymous complaints. However, in doing so, we must be mindful that such complaints can sometimes be malicious. We believe that everyone involved in our work has the right to complain, but individuals also have a right to be protected from unsubstantiated and potentially malicious allegations.

We strongly encourage you to provide your contact details so we can fully investigate the matter and inform you of the outcome.

7. Data Protection Complaints

In accordance with the **Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR)**, we have a specific process for handling complaints about personal data.

- You can submit a data protection complaint in writing to our designated data protection lead.
- We will acknowledge your complaint within **30 calendar days**.
- We will investigate your concern without undue delay, keeping you informed throughout the process.
- We will communicate the outcome promptly and clearly, explaining any actions taken.

If you remain dissatisfied with our handling of your data protection complaint, you may escalate the matter to the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)**.

8. Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated as confidential. Any communication regarding a complaint, including our response, will be subject to the constraints of the Data Protection Act.

9. Availability

This policy is publicly available on our website as a downloadable PDF. A hard copy can also be provided upon request from our office.

Last review: October 2025