



SUTTON MUSIC FESTIVAL

Complaints policy and procedure

1. Policy statement

Sutton Music Festival ('the Festival') is committed to delivering and maintaining high standards across all areas of our work. We believe it is important to work in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect.

We value all feedback including general comments, compliments and complaints. We learn important lessons from all the feedback we receive, and this helps us continuously improve our Festival.

We have developed this complaints policy and procedure to explain our approach to complaints. Our aim is to be clear about all the stages in the process.

We will:

- provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint;
- publicise our complaints policy and procedure on our website so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint;
- make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner;
- make sure that, wherever possible, complaints are resolved and relationships repaired;
- issue an annual feedback survey for Festival participants;
- learn from complaints and use them to improve our services.

2. What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction, however it is expressed. This includes complaints expressed face-to-face, via a phone call, in writing, via email or any other method.

The complaints procedure below is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and, wherever possible, are resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

3. Responsibilities

Our responsibility is to:

- deal with the complaint in a reasonable, sensitive and timely manner; and
- take action where appropriate.

The complainant's responsibility is to:

- if not resolved informally (see paragraph 5.2 below), bring their complaint, in writing, to our attention within 8 weeks of the issue arising;

- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action they have taken to date;
- allow us reasonable time to deal with the matter, and
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond our control.

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Festival's Executive Committee.

4. Confidentiality

We handle all complaint information sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Our Executive Committee will be made aware of any formal complaints that require referral to the Complaints Panel (set up as per paragraph 5.3c below).

In exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own facts). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

5. Complaints Procedure

5.1 How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint or provide feedback in the following ways.

- In person

During the four week duration of the Festival – raise any issues directly with the Key Person (see reception desk for details, or the Chairman

- By e-mail – Email your concerns to our Festival Chairman using the following email address: chair25.smf@gmail.com

5.2 Stage One – Informal Complaint

An informal approach will usually be the first step, depending on the nature of the concerns raised. It will generally be raised in person at the Festival. Any concerns at the Festival should initially be raised with the 'Key person' whose name is displayed on the noticeboard at the Registration Desk. If the concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed at 5.3 below.

5.3 Stage Two – Formal Complaint

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be made, and the following procedure should be followed:

- a) A formal complaint should be made in writing (email) to the Festival Chairman.
- b) The Festival Chairman will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 working days of receiving it.
- c) The Festival Chairman will refer the complaint to our Complaints Panel for consideration. Our Complaints Panel comprises three members of the Executive Committee none of whom will have been the subject of the complaint, nor, where a specific section of the Festival is the

subject of the complaint, involved in clerking that section. If appropriate, another person external to those already mentioned may also be included. This diversity of panel membership ensures a wide range of expertise and experience. It also maintains transparency in the process.

d) The Complaints Panel will be chaired by an Officer of the Festival who will be responsible for selecting the appropriate panel to consider the complaint.

e) Your complaint will be dealt with as soon as the relevant members of the panel can be brought together to consider the complaint. Our aim is to have an outcome/decision within four weeks. Where complaints are raised during the Festival this will be within four weeks of the Gala Concert, given how busy we are during the Festival itself. If the complaint is complex or additional information is needed, the timescale may need to be increased. We will keep you updated if this is the case.

f) If your complaint is about one of our Adjudicators, then if the Adjudicator is a member of the The British and International Federation of Festivals for Music, Dance and Speech (BIFF) the complaint will be considered alongside their current Code of Practice for Adjudicators and Festivals to assess whether there are any breaches.

g) You should be aware that the complaint will be discussed with the respondent, who will have the opportunity to present a written response to the complaint. This will also be provided to the Complaints Panel. As stated above at Point 4, confidentiality will be maintained when doing this unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.

h) Once the Complaints Panel has reached a decision we will aim to send you a written response within one week.

5.3 Stage Three – Referral to the Executive Committee

We hope that our Complaints Panel can resolve your complaint in an open and satisfactory way.

If, after receiving a written response from us, you still feel that your complaint is unresolved, you can ask for the matter to be referred to the Festival's Executive Committee for their consideration.

You should:

- Email your letter to the Chairman of the Executive Committee at chair25.smf@gmail.com
- Explain clearly where you feel that your complaint remains unresolved following the decision of the Complaints Panel.

Your complaint will then be further considered by the Executive Committee and if appropriate, an independent additional person.

The Executive Committee will examine the complaint and may wish to carry out further interviews, examine files / notes. They will aim to respond within four weeks in writing. Their decision will be final.

6. Redress and learning lessons

If your complaint is upheld, you should normally expect to receive an apology and an indication of the steps the Festival will take to ensure the issue complained of does not recur. The Festival

will not usually offer financial compensation. A log of complaints and the outcomes will be kept by the Festival so that lessons can be learnt for the future.

7. Review

This policy will be regularly reviewed by the Executive Committee.

Last Reviewed: July 2025