

# ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

## ENGLISH TOURING OPERA CUSTOMER COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to give comfort to anyone in contact with ETO and its work that complaints they might want to raise will be addressed efficiently and thoroughly in accordance with a clearly defined process.

### **Policy Statement**

ETO views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person (or organisation) that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- to provide a fair, clear customer comments and complaints procedure;
- to publicise the existence of our customer comments and complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- to make sure everyone at ETO knows what to do if a complaint is received;
- to make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way;
- to make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired;
- to gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

### **Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of ETO and its activities.

A complaint can be received orally in person, by phone, by email or in writing.

This policy covers complaints about:

- the standard of service we provide
- the behaviour of our staff
- any action or lack of action by staff affecting an individual or group

This policy does not cover:

- matters that have already been fully investigated through our customer comments and complaints procedure
- anonymous complaints
- complaints from staff which are covered by ETO's Discipline and Grievance policies

### **Dealing with complaints**

All complaints covered by this policy should be dealt with in accordance with the customer comments and complaints procedure set out below.

### **Publicising our customer comments and complaints procedure**

This policy, together with the customer comments and complaints procedure set out below, should be posted on the company web-site.

A copy should also be sent with the first substantive written response to any complaint.

**Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees, who have delegated its implementation to the General Manager.

The General Manager will present it to the Board for review annually, with any recommendations for changes/refinements that he/she feels advisable.

**Review**

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on:.. 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016 .[date] Last reviewed:..25<sup>th</sup> January 2017.[date]

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J. E. S. Straught".

## CUSTOMER COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### **ETO's commitment to you**

ETO is committed to exceeding our various customers' expectations in all that we do.

While striving to provide the highest possible standards of service, we acknowledge that sometimes things might go wrong. When this happens, we aim to:

- Encourage dissatisfied customers to comment / speak to a member of staff immediately
- Resolve the problem quickly, effectively and to the customer's satisfaction
- Learn from the complaint, so improving service for the future

If you are unhappy with any aspect of your experience when visiting an ETO performance, please feel free to speak to any member of our team. We may be able to address your comments immediately to ensure that your experience is as enjoyable as it should be. However, if you are unable to give your feedback when you are here, or would like to submit your comments after your visit, you can contact us by writing to us at

English Touring Opera  
3rd floor, 63 Charterhouse Street,  
London EC1M 6HJ

or by emailing us at:

[admin@englishtouringopera.org.uk](mailto:admin@englishtouringopera.org.uk)

### **Our standards for handling complaints**

You will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times. We would hope, too, that you will be courteous and fair in your dealings with our staff at all times

We will deal with your complaint promptly. We will do our best:

- To acknowledge receipt of a written or emailed complaint within a week; and
- To send you a full reply within four weeks of receipt
- To tell you the reason why and to let you know when we will be able to reply in full, if we cannot send a full reply within four weeks of receipt.

However, ETO is a small organisation, with limited resources. Particularly when we are engaged in our core activity of touring, it may be difficult or impossible for us to respond to you as swiftly as we would wish. We hope that you will understand, and will bear with us on such occasions.

## **Your rights**

If, after you have received a full reply from us, you still feel that your complaint has not been satisfactorily dealt with, you may request (if the matter has not already been considered at Board level) that it be referred to the Board and the first investigation reviewed. Any such request should be made in writing to the General Manager, within 21 days of the date of our reply.

In the case of certain serious complaints, you may have the right at any stage to complain to the Charity Commission. Information about the kind of complaints that the Charity Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

## **Confidentiality**

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

**PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH CUSTOMER COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS**  
*(for use and circulation only within ETO)*

**Receiving & Logging Complaints**

Complaints made orally – in person or by telephone

Any member of staff or volunteer who receives a complaint made orally, either in person or by telephone, should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint;
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number;
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to ETO (for example: audience member, donor);
- Tell the complainant that ETO 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 post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

All complaints

The General Manager will be responsible for maintaining the Complaints Log, in which all complaints should be recorded.

All complaints (whether received in person, by telephone, by email or in writing) should be reported within one week to the General Manager to be logged in the Complaints Log - whether or not the complaint has been resolved.

**Classification of Complaints**

When a complaint is logged, it should be assigned a category as follows:

Minor Complaints – General

These are complaints which, in the General Manager's judgment, are not of a kind to warrant Senior Management or Board attention.

Complaints in this category, if they have not already been dealt with at the time, should be addressed by staff in the ETO office.

Minor Complaints – Policy-Specific

These are complaints which, though still not warranting immediate Board attention, relate to areas of ETO activity governed by approved Board policies (eg Environmental Protection, Diversity, Data Protection, Health & Safety, Safeguarding Children and Young and Vulnerable People from Harm, Conflicts of Interest, Volunteer Management).

Complaints in this category, if they have not already been dealt with at the time, should be addressed by staff in the ETO office

Additionally, if the General Manager considers it appropriate, complaints in this category may be brought to the attention of the Board Members charged with monitoring the relevant policy (the Board Policy Monitors).

### Serious Complaints

These are complaints which, in the General Manager's judgment, raise serious concerns – for example, complaints which cast substantial doubt on ETO's financial and artistic integrity, its ability to fulfil its obligations to its employees, associates and/or stakeholders, its ability to fulfil its data protection obligations and/or its ability to protect children and young and vulnerable people.

The General Manager shall immediately notify the General Director, the Chair of the Board, the relevant Board Policy Monitors and other relevant management staff of any Serious Complaint

Any Serious Complaints must also be noted in the next set of Board Papers and thus brought to the attention of the Board as a whole.

### **Resolving Complaints**

#### Stage One

In many cases, where a complaint falls into either of the "Minor" categories, it will be best resolved by the person responsible for the subject of the complaint. 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.

Otherwise, the following procedure shall be followed:

As soon as complaints are logged with the General Manager, he/she will report them to:

- ETO's Head of Education, Technical & Production Manager, Head of Development or Head of Marketing as appropriate;
- ETO Board Policy Monitor (if the subject of the complaint relates to a Board Approved Policy).

The General Manager will delegate an appropriate person to investigate the complaint as necessary and then respond to it.

In the case of a Serious Complaint, the General Manager should generally investigate the complaint personally. Should that give rise to a conflict of interest (or potential conflict of interest), the Board Chair may appoint someone else to investigate.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

All those notified of a complaint in accordance with the above procedure should receive regular updates on progress.

## Communication with the complainant

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person investigating the complaint to the complainant within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of the public-facing sections of the complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified 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 reply to the complainant should draw the complainant's attention to the section of our customer comments and complaints procedure headed "Your rights", which explains their right to ask for the matter to be referred to the Board (if the matter has not already been considered at Board level), and their right (in certain limited circumstances) to take their complaint to the Charity Commission.

### ***Stage Two***

If, having received a response, the Complainant still feels his or her complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily, he or she may request (if the matter has not already been considered at Board level) that it be referred to the Board and the first investigation reviewed.

A request for such a review at Board level should be acknowledged within a week of receipt. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Board shall delegate one of the Board Members to investigate the facts of the case or require a suitably senior person within ETO's executive 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.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance to resolve it.

### **Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Board may vary the procedure set out above for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a review.

## Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints should be reviewed annually by the General Manager to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action, and a report made to the Board.

### APPENDIX 1 - PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS MADE IN PERSON OR BY TELEPHONE

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation.
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry. Show an interest in what is being said.  
Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details.  
Ask for clarification wherever necessary.
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation (e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you").
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise.
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue.
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver.
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told.
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.

ADOPTED: 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016

REVIEWED AND RE-ADOPTED: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017

