



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Author: Audio Active	Policy Owner: Michelle Hunter	Reviewer: Michelle Hunter	Last Reviewed: July 2024	Next Review: July 2025
Summary of Amendments: 28.02.25 Alex C - pg 8; Changed the title of the "Designated Person" for complaints from Director of Operations & Finance to the Director of Programmes & Operations.				

1.0 Introduction

AudioActive strives to provide the best possible service, and therefore we welcome feedback from individuals, users of our services, stakeholders, funding bodies and anyone who works with us, on all aspects of our services. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us evaluate and improve our work.

This Complaints Policy and Procedure outlines the ways in which people can raise a concern and/ or make a formal complaint about AudioActive, along with timescales for the process and outcomes.

All AudioActive staff and Board of Trustees members are required to read, understand and comply with this policy and its procedures.

We will ensure that this Complaints Policy and Procedure will be made available to organisations we work with and to people using our services.

The objectives of this Complaints Policy and Procedure are to:

- Ensure that everyone knows how to raise a concern and make a complaint, and how a concern and a complaint will be handled;
- Ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear time frames;
- Provide individuals with a fair and effective way to raise a concern and/ or complain about our services; and
- Ensure that concerns and complaints are monitored to improve our services.

We will ensure that we:

- Listen carefully to concerns and complaints and treat them as confidential, where possible;
- Record, store and manage all concerns and complaints accurately and in accordance with data protection laws;
- Investigate any complaint fully, objectively and within the stated time frame;
- Notify the complainant of the results of the investigation and any right of appeal;
- Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented in order to

ensure that there is no recurrence; and

- Report to our Trustee Board, the number of complaints received, the outcomes and any actions taken.

2.0 Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by an individual, whether justified or not.

An individual may make a complaint if they feel AudioActive has:

- failed to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service or made a mistake in the way the service was provided; and / or
- failed to act in a proper way.

3.0 Concern or Complaint

It is important to establish the difference between a concern and a complaint.

Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of them developing into formal complaints.

If you have any concerns about our services, please raise them in accordance with the procedure set out at paragraph 4 below.

If you are not happy with the response to your concern and/or you would like to make a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out at paragraph 5 below.

4.0 Concerns

4.1 Procedure for Raising a Concern by People Engaging with our Services

Any concerns you may have about our services can be made to any appropriate member of staff in the first instance, who will log the content and pass it to the Project Manager for discussion with the Team Leader about possible action to be taken.

The Team Leader will try to resolve the issue informally with the help of others that might be useful to the conversation, for example other staff, other managers, their supervisor or senior management.

Staff will ensure that they go back to the person who gave their concern within 2 weeks, so that issues do not drag on unnecessarily. The reason for any delays in responding should be communicated to the person who raised the concern.

If the person is unhappy with the response, they can have further conversation about it or if they would like to, make a formal complaint.

4.2 Procedure for Staff to Raise a Concern

If any member of AudioActive staff has a concern they would like to raise, they should do so at the earliest opportunity with their line manager either in writing or in person. If this is given in person, this should be followed up in writing by the staff member afterwards.

Staff should not discuss the issue with other staff unless it feels very important to do so. They may be asked to justify this at a later date.

The staff member's line manager must ensure that the concern is recorded and that they make time to discuss the issue with the member of staff, the timing of which should be discussed with the staff member for example the manager can ask "is this something that can wait one week until supervision or should we arrange a time to meet before then?"

All line managers should work with staff to help them resolve issues and improve their working arrangements wherever possible, and all concerns should be approached with this in mind.

If concerns cannot be resolved in this way, the staff member can follow the Grievance Policy.

5.0 Formal complaints

The following formal complaints policy and procedure is for complaints from people who engage with our services and activities and other stakeholders. Staff should only use this formal complaints policy and procedure if they have gone through the Grievance Policy first, and are unhappy with the outcome.

Formal complaints should be seen as a means of opening up communication between the complainant and senior management of the organisation. This policy and procedure is to help everyone behave in a way that reflects good practice and to ensure that everyone involved in the process has shared expectations about what should happen and when.

5.1 The Procedure for Managing Formal Complaints

There are three stages to the complaint's procedure:

Stage One – complaint

Stage Two – investigation

Stage Three – appeal

5.2 Stage One – Making a Formal Complaint

Formal complaints must be made in writing, marked "Private & Confidential" and sent either by email or post to the Designated Person (details of whom can be found in paragraph 6 below).

The complaint should include the complainant's name and address, the nature and date of the complaint and how they would like to see it resolved.

The complainant should keep a copy of their complaint.

The Designated Person will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 7 days from receipt.

The Designated Person will record the date and details of the complaint received in AudioActive's Complaints Register.

5.3 Stage Two - Investigating the Complaint

The Designated Person will then either undertake the investigation of the complaint themselves or allocate another appropriate person to do so.

The investigation should involve only those persons who might be able to shed light on what has gone wrong. The investigating person must only share the details of the complaint with others on a need to know basis in line with AudioActive's Information Sharing Policy.

The investigator will gather all available evidence relating to the complaint. They will keep records of who they spoke to and when.

Once the investigator has an understanding of the situation, they may contact the complainant to further understand how they would like to see the complaint resolved.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, AudioActive's Safeguarding Policy will be used alongside this policy and procedure.

Where serious allegations have been made against staff, the Disciplinary Policy will be used alongside this policy and procedure.

5.4 Communicating the Outcome of the Complaint

Within 21 days from the date of the Designated Person's acknowledgement of the complaint, the complainant will receive written confirmation of the outcome of the investigation, including any recommendations/remedies made, such as reviewing of policies, staff development and training or appropriate improvement to our services. The appeals process will be included in this correspondence.

Any delays to this timescale will be explained to the complainant and the timescale for communicating the outcome of a complaint should be no longer than 30 days, unless in exceptional circumstances.

AudioActive will take all necessary steps to make good the cause of the complaint (this may involve where appropriate an explanation and apology), and to make any necessary adaptations to practise, policy or procedure to prevent recurrence.

If an individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome from Stage Two, they can appeal within 7 days from the date of the outcome letter and progress to Stage Three.

5.5 Stage Three – Appeal

If the complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at Stage Two, then within 7 days from the date of the outcome letter, the complainant may appeal the outcome, either in writing or in person, to the Chief Executive (details of whom can be found below).

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive then the appeal can be made to two Trustees.

If making their appeal in person, the complainant has the right to be accompanied by a friend or advocate. The Chief Executive Officer / Trustees also have the right to have an advisor present.

Upon receipt of the appeal, the Chief Executive Officer / Trustees will review the Stage Two investigation and recommend one of the following actions:

- Uphold the action taken at Stage Two; or
- Make changes to the Stage Two recommendation/actions.

Within 14 days from AudioActive's receipt of the appeal, the complainant should be informed in writing of the outcome of Stage Three, the decision reached about this complaint will then be final but other options available to the complainant, such as contacting the Charity Commission, the funding body, or a solicitor, will be detailed in the letter.

AudioActive's responses to all complaints will be added to the AudioActive's Complaints Register. When appropriate, the complaint will be closed and the details of the complaint will be filed.

5.6 Our reporting of complaints to our Trustee Board

The Trustee Board shall be informed by the Designated Person at the first available Trustee Board Meeting of the number and nature of any formal complaints and their outcome, and consideration will be given to the implications these have for the planning and management of future services annually, as part of AudioActive's self-evaluation.

6.0 Details of the Designated Person and Chief Executive Officer

The "Designated Person" for complaints is the Director of Programmes & Operations.

The Designated Person is responsible for:

- Receiving, registering receipt of and logging all formal complaints.
- Deciding how to investigate the complaint, delegate tasks and manage the process.
- Speaking to those involved to gather facts, opinions and evidence and record accurately.
- Seeking advice and guidance where necessary to ensure a fair process.
- Concluding the complaint investigation with an outcome, conveyed to the complainant.
- Ensuring that all complaints are dealt with in a timely manner consistent with this policy.
- Ensuring that all relevant information is in the right correspondence.
- Liaising with senior managers and Trustees as is necessary.
- Ensuring that all complaints are logged effectively to enable oversight and reporting.
- Reports to senior management and Trustees to offer oversight of complaints.

The Chief Executive Officer is Adam Joolia. Adam can be contacted by email at adam@audioactive.org.uk

The Alternative Designated Person is the Chief Executive Officer.

The Alternative Designated Person is responsible for:

- Undertaking all of the responsibilities of the Designated Person if the

complaint is about the Designated Person.

- Ensuring the Designated Person is treated fairly and respectfully throughout the process.

If a complaint relates to the Designated Person, please read 'Alternative Designated Person' for 'Designated Person' throughout this policy. If the complaint concerns the Alternative Designated Person, it will instead go to two Trustees.