

Dear Members,

You only realise how well things are going when something wrong happens.

We've received a complaint!

It's only a small one but, given that this is the time of year when many of you are renewing their membership, I thought I'd take the chance to remind everyone about our code of practice.

It's good to read it every year when you renew. It reminds us what we stand for and how we want to conduct ourselves in our business. When you renew your membership, you are also renewing your commitment to our way of working.

I don't think we slip up over our teaching. The feedback we get from our customers is testament to that. Where we might make a mistake is over the other stuff. The other stuff is hugely important to our customers- maybe just as important as the singing. Stuff like accessible venues, the right catering, the right accommodation- that kind of thing.

We are really good at looking after our singers. They are our bread and butter. They pay our wages...and they are still our customers during the tea break or the shared lunch or whatever.

We create such a family atmosphere that even to us, when we socialise outside of the singing, we feel like we are with a bunch of friends rather than paying customers. That blurred line can make us forget our professional selves. It affects us all then. Customers may not come back - to any of us.

One of our customers made a mild and totally valid point, drawing attention to something that was wrong about the catering. The situation escalated when she was ridiculed for it. She felt so bad she wanted to write to the trustees asking what could we do about it? Luckily, she understood our way of working. She understood the principles of shared practice and that we don't have a policing hierarchy. She had also

had numerous other positive experiences with NVN practitioners.

The problem only became a problem because of a bad reaction to a complaint. That's been put right now with a sincere apology from the member and support from Gill and myself, but it strikes me that dealing with complaints is quite a skill.

If any of you have any tips, techniques and anecdotes to help manage difficult situations or to stop mild situations becoming difficult, then please do share.

In harmony

Jules