



FORMAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY¹

1. Overview

1.1 Every person or organisation that comes into contact with the Christ Church Network has the right to expect a high standard of service and behaviours. However, we appreciate that Churches are not immune from challenge or complaint and that, from time to time, there may be occasions when people feel these standards are not met.

1.2 Wherever possible we would prefer to follow biblical principles to reconcile differences. We would aim to do so using an informal process, involving discussion with the complainant, and listening carefully and respectfully to their concerns. However, attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or may not be appropriate. This formal Complaints Handling Policy is available for such cases.

1.3 The Christ Church Network seeks to be open, transparent, and accountable in all our ministries and activities. The Network strives to promote a culture of openness and 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.

2. Policy purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

2.1 Provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.

2.2 Publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to make a complaint.

2.3 Make sure everyone in the Network knows what to do if a complaint is received.

2.4 Make sure all complaints are investigated constructively, effectively and in a timely way.

2.5 Make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and relationships repaired.

2.6 Learn from our mistakes and gather information that will help us to improve what we do.

3. Definition of a complaint

3.1 A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Christ Church Network. A complaint might involve a service that the Network Churches provide (for example a mid-week group, a baptism, a funeral, a wedding); the

¹ The Christ Church Network is the operating name of the Newland Christian Trust: a Christian charity (1101648) and Limited Company (04976143)

behaviour of an Elder/Trustee, employee, volunteer or Church member (for example, inappropriate language or behaviour, or unlawful discrimination); or the application of Church policies or procedures.

3.2 This Complaints Handling policy does not cover safeguarding concerns relating to child or adult protection. There is a separate set of safeguarding policies available (<https://Christchurchnewland.org.uk/safeguarding.htm>) and you should report any safeguarding concern to the Safeguarding Coordinator, Annette Benstead (nettebenstead@gmail.com).

3.3 This policy does not cover any employment grievance. There is a separate Grievance Policy which deals with complaints and concerns regarding employment matters.

4. How to make a complaint

4.1 If you believe you have reasonable grounds for a complaint which is not able to be resolved informally you can make a complaint.

4.2 You should submit your complaint in writing using the Christ Church Network Complaints Form (see Appendix 1).

4.3 The Complaints Form should be sent to the Operations Manager, Christ Church Network, 552 Beverley Road, Hull, HU6 7LG or by e-mail to info@christchurchnetwork.org.uk

4.4 Anonymous complaints will not be investigated unless there are exceptional circumstances.

5. Confidentiality

5.1 All complaint information will be handled carefully and sensitively, informing only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

5.2 However, on occasion, the Network may need to make a public statement about the subject matter of the complaint, or report it to statutory authorities, or seek professional advice. In these circumstances, the Network cannot guarantee to keep your complaint confidential.

6. Resolving complaints

Stage one

6.1 The Complaints Form should be passed to a nominated Elder² within one week.

6.2 Any potential conflict of interest will be considered when nominating an Elder to undertake the investigation.

6.3 If the complaint concerns an Elder (including the Senior Minister) the remaining Elders will conduct the investigation.

6.4 The nominated Elder will investigate the complaint and to take appropriate action.

² Reference to Elder means Network Elder

6.5 The investigation is likely to involve contacting you for further information, finding out what happened, when it happened, who was involved and, if necessary, interviewing people involved. A summary account of each of these conversations will be documented.

6.6 If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed (unless this would seriously prejudice the investigation) and given an opportunity to respond.

6.7 Complaints should be acknowledged by the Elder handling the complaint 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 this Complaints Handling Policy should be attached.

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

6.9 Whether the complaint is found to be 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.

Stage Two

6.10 If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request in writing that the complaint is reviewed by the entire Eldership team (excepting the Elder who conducted the Stage One investigation).

6.11 Elders with any declared potential conflict of interest will not be involved in Stage Two.

6.12 The request to proceed to Stage Two should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it and indicate when the complainant can expect a reply.

6.13 The Eldership Team (excepting the Elder who conducted Stage One) will investigate the facts of the case. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the Elder who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

6.14 If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed (unless this would seriously prejudice the investigation) and given a further opportunity to respond.

6.15 The Elder who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening but should not otherwise be involved in the investigation.

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

6.17 Whether the complaint is upheld 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.

6.18 The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Eldership Team decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

6.19 Where the complaint concerns an Elder (including the Senior Minister), Stage Two will be referred to the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) Bishop.

7. Dissatisfaction with the complaint handling

7.1 If you are not satisfied with the way in which your complaint has been dealt with, you should write to the Operations Manager within seven days of receiving the outcome of your complaint, stating that you wish to appeal and outline the grounds of your appeal. The Elders will determine how to review your appeal or whether to refer to the AMiE Bishop.

7.2 You can complain to the Charity Commission if you feel all other available methods of resolving the complaint have been attempted and have failed. Information about when the Commission will or will not become involved and what action should be taken if there is a complaint about a charity can be found on their website at:

www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

8. Monitoring and learning from complaints

Complaints will be reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Reviewed May 2022

For review May 2023



Complaints Form

Your details

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email address:

Details of your complaint

Date(s):

Person(s):

Complaint about: *Briefly describe the nature of your complaint (you may continue on a separate sheet).*

Supporting information:

State the matter or name of the person who is the subject of the complaint, what happened, when and where. Provide the contact details or statements of any witnesses. Include any additional information that you think would be helpful.

If complaining about a decision, explain what the decision was about, when it was taken, and who made it. Explain what impact this has had, or you may fear will have, and upon whom. Provide any additional information that you believe would be helpful.

Have you tried to resolve this matter informally? Yes No

Explain briefly why you decided not to try to resolve the matter informally.

If you tried to resolve this matter informally, what happened?

State who you dealt with, when and where, what information you provided to them, and what you felt was unsatisfactory about the outcome.

Action sought:

Describe what actions you want the Network to take. While the Elders cannot promise to do what you ask, it would be helpful to understand what you are seeking.

The Network will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the Network Data Protection policy. The Network cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your complaint confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share your data in order to review and resolve your complaint.

Date you submitted your complaint to the Network: