

Christ Church Fulwood

Complaints Policy

Purpose of the Policy

- We are a large church family and believe we owe everything to Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. We have a threefold vision to plant churches, train leaders and grow Fulwood both numerically and spiritually. Within this vision we are committed to being a loving church family, caring for one another and our wider community in many practical ways and modelling our love for each other on Jesus Christ's sacrificial love for us (Philippians 2:5-8).
- The Bible teaches us that we are imperfect and is realistic that disputes/disagreements will occur. It is also clear on the value of all human life and our equal status before God (Titus 2:11-14). It gives us instructions on how to deal with disputes in various settings (Matthew 18:15-17, 1Cor 6, 2Cor2:5-8) and instructs us clearly in our attitude to others (James 1:9, Proverbs 15:1, Colossians 3:13).
- We recognise that sometimes we may get things wrong, or that there may be disagreements with how and why we do things, and that people may be unhappy with things we do or don't do. We are keen to ensure we listen when this happens and respond with humility and grace.
- Therefore we want to ensure:
 - i. the name of God and His gospel are honoured.
 - ii. we investigate all complaints fairly and in a timely way.
 - iii. we deal with the complaint in a way that loves and respects both the complainant and those whom the complaint is directed against.
 - iv. wherever possible complaints are resolved and relationships are restored.
- This policy sets out what should happen when someone has a complaint about the work of Christ Church Fulwood, a member of our staff, or one of our volunteers. We want to respond to complaints in an individual and appropriate way, but be clear about the process that will be followed and what a complainant can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the work of Christ Church Fulwood, our staff or our volunteers.
- Anyone is entitled to make a complaint.

- We are mindful that anybody can make a mistake and that we should seek to bear with one another in love. Wherever possible the first step in voicing dissatisfaction should be done informally as soon a concern arises. We would generally encourage complainants to speak directly to the person involved, providing support via a staff member, warden or team leader if needed. There may be situations however where this is not appropriate and wardens or team leaders can provide advice in cases of uncertainty.
- We would hope that most concerns can be addressed and resolved informally
- If concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved via the informal route, or the nature of the complaint is such that is not appropriate to deal with it informally then a formal complaint process may be required.

What is not covered by this policy

- Complaints that fall under a safeguarding category. They **must** be reported to the parish safeguarding officers (PSO) who will follow the church safeguarding procedures. If there is doubt as to whether a complaint is a safeguarding issue please discuss it with the PSOs in the first instance.
- Complaints from staff. These are covered by the grievance and whistleblowing policies within the staff handbook.
- Complaints specifically relating to clergy will follow the diocesan policy(Clergy Discipline Measure)

How to make a formal complaint?

- A formal complaint should be made in writing, within 12 months of the matter in question. The complaint can be addressed to the church office, or directly to the staff member responsible for the area of concern.
- If the complainant is unable to make the complaint in writing they can contact the office and a member of the office staff should document:
 - The complainant's name and contact details
 - The nature of the complaint
 - The relationship of the complainant to Christ Church Fulwood
- This information should be passed to the complaint investigator (see below) or the Office Manager/Director of Operations who will contact the complainant for further details within 5 working days. They should also direct the complainant to the complaints policy and the timeframes contained within it.
- We will acknowledge complaints in writing within 5 working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. We will direct the complainant to this complaints policy

so they are aware of the process to be undertaken and give them a named person who will be responsible for handling the complaint and communicating with them.

- The complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate member of staff, team leader or warden who will act as the complaint investigator. Their role is to impartially review the complaint, speak to all parties involved and review any other evidence related to the complaint. A confidential file for each complaint should be created and all discussions related to the complaint should be documented contemporaneously. Where a complaint is about a member of staff their line manager or the vicar/associate vicar will act as the complaint investigator. Where this is inappropriate a church warden will take on this role.
- We will aim to respond to complaints within 30 working days in writing, and/or in person if requested. If there is going to be a delay in response then we will inform the complainant of this and the reason for the delay, as well as the expected timeframe for a response.
- If the complaint is upheld the response should involve an apology where necessary, an explanation, and an agreed outcome.
- If the complaint is not upheld the reasons for this will be clearly stated and the complainant directed to the appeals process should they be unhappy with the outcome.
- Throughout the complaints process we will act kindly, honestly and without prejudice.

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality is important and sharing of information should only be on a “need to know” basis while the complaint is being investigated. The nature of the complaint, and details of anyone involved will only be shared as necessary in order to appropriately investigate the complaint.
- There are times when information may need to be shared outside of the immediate complaint investigating team eg. risk to someone’s safety, safeguarding concerns, concerns the law has been broken or other serious incident. The people involved should generally be informed of this, and where necessary their consent sought, unless advice to the contrary is received from the church or diocesan safeguarding team or the police.
- The complainant should also be asked to observe reasonable confidentiality while the complaint is investigated in order for the process to occur fairly and thoroughly.
- The complainant should be asked only to communicate with the complaint investigator until the complaint response is received.

Appeals

- Where a complainant is unhappy with the response they can lodge an appeal within 14 days of the response- this should be made in writing and should clearly outline why they are appealing and what they feel would resolve their concerns.
- Appeals will be reviewed by the initial investigator's line manager/vicar/associate vicar/church warden as appropriate and a response given within 30 days. The wardens should be informed of any complaint appeals to provide oversight.
- If a complainant is not satisfied with the appeal response they should be directed to the Sheffield Diocese Diocesan secretary.
- If the outcome of either the initial complaint review or appeal is that the complaint has been made in bad faith or vexatiously the complainant will be informed of this and we reserve the right not to respond to further similar complaints from the same complainant.

Complaint Reviews

- The vicar/associate vicar and wardens will review all formal complaints on an annual basis to ensure lessons are learnt and identify any trends that need addressing or further action that needs to be taken.

This policy does not replace any of the policies laid out in the staff handbook, and if necessary a more appropriate policy will be followed, eg. staff bullying and harassment policy, staff grievance policy.