

HCC Complaints Policy



Introduction

1. **Definition of a Complaint** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of Huntingdonshire Community Church's (HCC's) operations, whether actions taken or lack of action, justified or not. It can come verbally, by telephone, email, or by letter.
2. We recognise complaints are different from concerns. Where there is a doubt, it will be treated as a complaint.
3. We recognise complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. We aim to resolve all complaints in a timely and satisfactory matter for everyone's benefit.
4. We regard complaints as a source of learning and improvement and when responding to a complaint we will acknowledge if things have gone wrong and take proportionate action to put things right whether an apology or changes to services for example.
5. This policy covers all staff, trustees, volunteers and church members whilst engaged with work or visits related to HCC. We ask that everyone follows our process and procedures in order to get the best outcome with least complications.
6. Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Trustees.
7. Our records are kept for 3 years.
8. If a serious incident takes place, charity trustees are required to report what happened to the Charity Commission and explain how it is being managed. An actual or alleged incident must be promptly reported to all the relevant authorities.

The Purpose of this Policy

9. An effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships between the Church and other individuals or bodies with whom we interact. Effective handling of complaints demonstrates our commitment to providing the best possible service. It helps us to find out how things have gone wrong, how to put them right, and to prevent future re-occurrences.
10. We commit to:
 - a. ensuring that everyone is treated equally, regardless of: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation;
 - b. providing a fair and easily understood procedure for dealing with complaints ensuring everyone knows how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be handled;
 - c. publicising and making known the existence of this policy, together with relevant contact details and procedural guides, and to ensure that all who are responsible for HCC's affairs

understand what needs to be done should a complaint occur;

- d. ensuring that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear timeframes and that every effort is made to resolve matters satisfactorily for all parties;
- e. ensure that complaints are monitored to improve our services through being used as a source of information for future reference and improvements in process, where appropriate.

Confidentiality

11. All complaint information will be handled sensitively and confidentially, ie telling only those who need to know, and with due regard to data protection requirements.

Procedure to Follow in the Event a Complaint is Made

12. Complaints should be made, either verbally or in writing, to a member of the Leadership Team or Trustees, or to the HCC office through email admin@hccuk.org, telephone 01480 411665.

13. Telephoned or verbal complaints must be recorded in writing, with the following details:

- Date and name of the person receiving the complaint;
- Name, address and contact details of the person making the complaint;
- The relationship between the complainant and the Church;
- Facts of the complaint.

14. The person making the complaint must be told:

- that we have a procedure;
- what will happen next;
- how long it should take to be dealt with.

15. The person making the complaint should be encouraged to put their complaint in writing so that a record in their own words can be kept.

Resolving a Complaint

16. Ideally the person complained about should deal with it, if it is possible and appropriate to do so. If this is not appropriate, the Senior Leader should be contacted.

17. Whether resolved or otherwise, the complaint should be passed to the Chair of the Trustees within one week of the occurrence, who must record it in the complaints log.

18. If unresolved, the issue must be delegated to another Trustee for investigation and action.

19. Any individual who is the subject of the complaint must be informed and given the opportunity to respond.

20. The person making the complaint must receive an acknowledgement from the person responsible for the investigation within one week, with their estimate of the likely timeframe, and with a copy of the complaints policy.

21. The person making the complaint should receive a judgement or a progress report within 4 weeks, detailing the action(s) taken in the investigation, any conclusion and action resulting.

Specific Types of Complaints: Data Protection, Fundraising, Safeguarding

Data Protection Complaints

22. If you wish to complain to the charity about:
- how your personal information has been processed;
 - how your complaint has been handled, or
 - appeal against any decision made following a complaint.

please address your complaints to the Data Protection Officer (DPO)(the Senior Leader)

23. The procedure for handling data protection complaints is as follows:
- a. Complaints regarding how your personal information has been processed should be submitted to the DPO, who will acknowledge receipt within 10 working days.
 - b. The DPO will review and respond in writing to your complaint, within 20 working days of receipt. If a complaint is complex and we cannot send a full reply within 20 working days, we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full. If an extension is required, this will be with the agreement of both parties and up to a maximum of a further 20 working days.
 - c. If you are dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been handled, then you may contact us, outlining your concerns, and an independent staff member will respond to you within 10 working days, to outline the next steps.
 - d. If you remain dissatisfied, you may forward your complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (contact details can be found on their website at: <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/handling/>).

Fundraising Complaints

24. **Definition** Fundraising complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction at any aspect of the Church's fundraising activities, including administrative practices or procedures, and acts carried out by third party suppliers.
25. The Church is committed to being open and honest in all our dealings with our members and supporters. It is important that those who give us support in any way, have access to a means of making a complaint. If you have a complaint, please contact the Finance Manager via admin@hccuk.org.
26. If you are not satisfied with the answer received, the Fundraising Regulator will deal with all complaints that are concerned with a breach of the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice, or a breach of the Fundraising Promise, provided that the complainant has first directed the complaint to the charity concerned.
27. The procedure for handling fundraising complaints is as follows:
- a. Telephone complaints will be logged, and every effort will be made to resolve the matter over the telephone. The complaint will be summarised at the end of a call, and if you are satisfied, that will be the end of the matter; however, the complaint will be included in our annual report to

the Fundraising Regulator.

b. All complaints, either by telephone, post or email, will be acknowledged in writing within 14 days. We will seek to resolve the complaint within 30 working days. At this stage, further contact with you will only be made when we have insufficient details to take the complaint forward.

c. We will consult with the complaints co-ordinator (or equivalent) and any relevant staff or third parties involved (for example a supplier, or partner) to inform them of the situation, and gather any relevant information. We will take care to record all the important points and file these with the case.

d. Having gathered all the relevant information, we will hold an assessment meeting with the Senior Leader, and the staff/ third parties concerned.

e. The assessment meeting will set out the nature of the complaint and determine any action that needs to be taken. We will make a note of whether it is about an alleged breach of the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice, and/ or the Fundraising Promise. The Fundraising Regulator will need this information if the complaint is referred to them.

28. If the complaint is justified we will write to you to apologise, and to reassure you that the complaint will be used to improve on our fundraising activities in the future, and how this will be done. We will also instigate action to prevent any recurrence of the problem.

29. If the complaint is not justified we will write to you to explain that we will not be changing our fundraising practices and give clear reason(s) for our position.

30. We always take complaints very seriously and assure you the investigation will always be as thorough as possible. Accurate records will be kept of all the investigations which have been carried out.

31. **Extension of Information Gathering Period** In exceptional circumstances, we may need more time than 30 days to gather all the information (for example, if a key member of staff is on annual leave or is sick). If this happens, we will contact you in writing, with a copy to the Fundraising Regulator, outlining the situation.

32. If the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction:

a. If you are not happy with our response, you should contact the Fundraising Regulator within two months. We, in turn, will ensure that all correspondence is on file, and can be made available to the Fundraising Regulator if the complaint is pursued further.

b. If you are still dissatisfied, you can ask the Fundraising Regulator to look again at your complaint. Their decision will be made within 60 days and will be final. The charity agrees to abide by decisions made by the Fundraising Regulator Board.

33. **Contact details for the Fundraising Regulator** Fundraising Regulator staff are available to assist and advise members of the public, charities and fundraising organisations. The contact details are as follows:

2nd floor CAN Mezzanine Building,
49-51 East Road,
London, N1 6AH
Phone: 0300 999 3407
Email: enquiries@fundraisingregulator.org.uk

34. **Contact details for the Charity Commission** The Charity Commission should be contacted where your concerns relate to:

- dishonest handling of funds;
- misapplication of charitable funds;
- actions that contravene the Church's Governing Document or charity law; and
- actions that threaten to bring the Church into disrepute

Charity Commission Direct PO Box 1227
Liverpool L69 3UG
Website: www.charity-commission.gov.uk

Safeguarding Complaints

35. Protecting people and safeguarding responsibilities are governance priorities, and HCC takes reasonable steps to protect people who come into contact with the Church from harm.

36. If you have any concerns about the behaviour of a member of staff, volunteers, church members or visitors in any situation, it is vital that you tell us about it immediately, so that appropriate action can be taken.

27. This complaints policy will work alongside HCC's Safeguarding and Whistleblowing Policies.

28. The procedure for safeguarding complaints is as follows:

- a. We take all concerns and complaints seriously. If we have an incident or allegation of abuse, we will handle and record it in a secure and responsible way, and in accordance with any legal and statutory obligations.
- b. We will respect your confidentiality and keep your complaint confidential as far as possible. Any information about the complaint will usually only be shared with those who need to know, in order to help resolve it. There may however be occasions when we cannot provide absolute confidentiality; for example, in circumstances where a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm, and any relevant information will be shared with others concerned in the safety and welfare of service users.
- c. We will handle information in line with the data protection legislation.
- d. We will report to the police if the incident or concern involves criminal behaviour. Where necessary, we will also refer to social services and report to other agencies (ie send a serious incident report to the Charity Commission).
- e. If the complaint is received by telephone, we will listen and record the complaint and summarise for the complainant, to ensure that the details are correct. The complaint will then be passed with due haste to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL); alternatively, you can make a complaint using your preferred method and format of communication direct to the DSL, whose contact details are as follows: safeguarding@hccuk.org.
- f. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):
 - will acknowledge your complaint within five days of receipt;

- will keep you informed throughout the process;
 - contact the Senior Leader for a decision on whether to conduct an internal enquiry, or whether it is necessary to pass to another agency, such as: the police, social services, or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
 - No safeguarding decision will be made in isolation.
- g. The DSL will ask the receiving agency to:
- keep the Charity informed; and
 - be included in any strategy meetings which may be held.
- h. The person making the original complaint will be informed if other agencies are involved.
- i. At the end of the process, the complainant, family and alleged perpetrator will be informed of decisions made.
- j. The DBS will be kept informed throughout this process and **MUST** be informed of the final decision.