

Complaints and Grievances Procedure

1. Complaints and Grievances

A **complaint** is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about an action, or lack of action by a person acting on behalf of the church, or about the policies and procedures of the church.

A **grievance** is a complaint that is made by a person that is engaged by the parish, whether paid (for instance, paid youth workers and administrators) or holding an unremunerated office (for instance, Sunday School leaders, servers).

A complaint or a grievance may include an allegation that a person has behaved in an unacceptable way.

2. Making a complaint or Grievance

Most complaints and grievances should be taken to one of the Church Wardens. The vicar or a member of the ministry team (Curate, Readers, Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary) can receive the details in the absence of the churchwarden.

If your complaint is about the clergy (The Vicar, curate or retired ordained priests), it should be sent to the area Archdeacon or area Bishop. Details are given below.

The Venerable Alastair Cutting
Archdeacon of Lewisham & Greenwich
07736 676106 Alastair.Cutting@southwark.anglican.org

The Church of England has specific procedures for investigation of complaints against clergy. It also handles complaints and grievances about licensed or commissioned ministers (Readers, Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries, Church Army Officers). However, these should be given initially to our vicar.

3. How the Matter will be handled

The aim always, when responding to complaints and grievances, is to enable them to be speedily and openly investigated. It is important that appropriate methods and authorities are involved where necessary.

If a complaint or grievance relates to or includes an allegation that a child or adult who may be vulnerable has been harmed or is at risk of harm, or that an adult or another child may have caused harm to a child or adult who may be vulnerable, it must be responded to through the Diocesan procedures for handling allegations of abuse. Our church procedures for safeguarding will be employed. References about this are below.

4. Informal stage

The majority of complaints and grievances can be resolved informally, speedily and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation. The churchwarden (or line manager if

grievance) will involve the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, and will hopefully be able to ensure the matter is resolved. The person that raised the complaint will be kept informed of the outcome.

If the complaint is complex the churchwarden (or line manager if grievance) will arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint in more detail. The churchwarden may appoint a note taker for that meeting, and the complainant may be accompanied or represented by a friend or other supporter.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the time, then the churchwarden or line manager will consider the information and draw a conclusion. They will inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint or grievance of the outcome, ideally within a week of the complaint or grievance being made.

If the person bringing the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome at the problem-solving stage, they may then invoke a formal procedure, as follows.

5. Formal procedure for complaints and grievances

Stage 1

A **complaint** should be submitted in writing to a churchwarden of the parish (who is not him or herself the subject of the complaint).

A **grievance** should be submitted in writing to the person to whom the person bringing the grievance is accountable; this will be the direct line manager of a paid employee, or the person responsible for coordinating the work of a volunteer. If, however, it is the manager or responsible person who is the subject of the grievance, the grievance should be taken to a churchwarden.

The churchwarden (if a complaint) or line manager (if a grievance) will meet with the complainant to listen to and note the facts of the complaint or grievance. The person bringing the complaint has the opportunity to state his or her case; and to be represented, if they wish, at any meeting, by a friend or other supporter. The churchwarden will arrange for a note taker to be present.

The person who is the subject of the complaint or grievance will be given the facts relating to it. The churchwarden/ line manager will then interview the subject of the complaint or grievance, who may also be represented by a friend or other supporter if they wish, to listen to their response to the complaint or grievance brought against them.

The churchwarden/line manager may then interview any other relevant parties. The churchwarden/line manager then draws conclusions and informs the complainant and the subject of the complaint or grievance of the outcome, ideally within a week of the complaint or grievance being made.

Stage 2

If the reply given at stage 1 does not satisfactorily resolve the complaint or grievance, the person raising the matter should be asked to put it in writing to a churchwarden, who will take the complaint to the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

The PCC will form a panel of three of its members who have not been involved in the process before. This panel will receive all of the documentation from the previous investigation at Stage 1.

A meeting will be arranged so that the panel can hear from the complainant and his/her supporter. A note taker will be present. They will also arrange to hear from the subject of the complaint or grievance and his/her supporter, and the churchwarden or line manager who investigated the complaint at the first stage. Witnesses may be called and the panel will ask questions in order to establish as clear a view as possible of the facts and the reasons why resolution could not be made at stage one.

The panel members will then sit alone to form a judgement and make a decision about the complaint or grievance.

They will inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint or grievance of the outcome, within a month of the complaint being made.

The decision of the panel representing the PCC will be final.

6. Possible outcomes

If the complaint or grievance has been upheld at any stage, possible resolution includes:

- Mediation
- Change in policy or practice, or clarifying of current policy or practice
- Training, coaching or mentoring for either/both parties
- An acknowledgement or apology from the subject of the grievance

As a result of an investigation into a complaint or a grievance, it may be necessary to initiate further formal processes through the disciplinary procedure.

Approved July 2021

INFORMAL STAGE

Complaint received by
- Church Warden (or Bishop/
Archdeacon if about Clergy
- Line manager is grievance

Complaint is investigated

Outcome is communicated

Is complainant satisfied?

Yes

End of process

No

STAGE 1

Complainant makes formal complaint to church warden or formal grievance to line manager

Complaint is investigated

Outcome is communicated

Is complainant satisfied?

Yes

No

STAGE 2

Complainant makes formal written complaint to church warden or line manager

PCC forms panel of 3 members

Complaint is investigated

Outcome is communicated

