

The Redeemer Trust

Complaints Policy and procedures:

The Charity Trustees of The Redeemer Trust approved the following complaints policy and procedure on 28 May 2021.
Version 2.0

1. Purpose of this policy

The primary purpose of the Redeemer Church complaints procedure is to provide a process for dealing with complaints relating to the behaviour of, or activities and decisions taken by, the church's Elder's, staff, or volunteers.

This policy and procedures aim to provide Elder's, staff or volunteers, with clear and simple instructions as to how to respond to a complaint and how concerns should be handled. They are not provided for training purposes and will not be used as a substitute for training.

This policy outlines how seriously we take:

Complaints

How we will deal with them appropriately

How we will and use them as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future

2 Our Commitment

This policy applies to everyone who works on our behalf with whether trustees, senior leaders, group / ministry leaders, paid staff, volunteers, or others working on our behalf.

- We will provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear, transparent, and easy for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- We will publicise the existence of our complaints policy and procedure so that people know how/who to contact us to make a complaint.
- We will ensure everyone at Redeemer Church knows who to pass a complaint to if one is received.
- We will ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way, following the policies and processes laid out here
 - Any investigation of the concerns must adhere to the church's procedures in relation to conflict of interest
 - Any person(s) appointed to investigate the complaint must have sufficient authority within the church to avoid either intentional or unintentional interference with the process including existing relationships
- We will ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and do our best to see that relationships are repaired
- Reflect on the experiences to help improve what we do and how we do it

3 Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of church life. This can be about a person, or persons, an activity or a group or about a service that is provided by the church.

This policy outlines a three stage complaints procedure:

- **Stage One** : is part of the formal complaints procedure but resolution of the complaint or issues is achieved by informal conversations rather than a formal investigation. Please note that this stage is optional and that if the complainant wishes to go to Stage 2, they have every right to do so.
- **Stage Two** : Formal Investigation
- **Stage Three**: Appeal

4 Source of Complaints

Complaints may be received from a number of sources, (eg phone, in person, email etc) . We will establish whether the complainant wishes to commence at stage one (informal resolution) or Stage 2 (formal Investigation)

5 Responsibility

- We will appoint a person responsible for receiving complaints
- The decision-making group will be The Redeemer Trust trustees
- The management and oversight for this policy and its implementation sits with the board of trustees of The Redeemer Trust.

6 Receiving Complaints

The church has a form for recording complaints and ideally, they should be raised using this document. If, however, the church receives a written complaint which is not on the correct form, the person designated to receive the complaints will ensure that all the information required for the form has been included. If not, they will request the additional information that would have been provided had the form been completed.

Complaints can also be made verbally, where a verbal complaint is received: the nominated recipient of complaints will:

- Complete the form within 48 hours of the receipt of complaint
- Write down the facts and circumstances of the complaint and any relevant background information
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number and names of any other involved
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Redeemer Church
- Signpost the complainant to these procedures so that they understand the process that will be followed
- Advise the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Confirm that the record accurately reflects the conversations that took place and that it captures adequately the concern that they are raising
- Establish with the complainant their desired outcome of their complaint, (e.g., an apology, some other form of restoration or actions they wish to see taken such as changes to policies or procedures etc)

7. Formal acknowledgement

A formal acknowledgment of receipt of their complaint will be issued to the complainant within 7 days

8 Plan Response

A decision needs to be made about the nature of the complaint and how it will be handled. This will consider such factors as:

- Has the threshold for reporting to statutory services been met?
- Has the threshold for any regulatory reporting been met?

- Has the threshold for an internal investigation been met and if so:
 - Who will be involved?
 - How we will resolve this?
 - By when?

9. Communicate Response

- Communicate the process to the complainant
- Communicate who is their point of contact

Procedures - Resolving Complaints

Stage One: Informal process

Wherever possible the church would prefer to follow Scriptural principles of reconciling differences. E.g., Matthew 18. However, on occasion attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or may not even be appropriate. A formal complaints process is available for such cases. It is hoped that during this stage, most complaints can be resolved by talking, sharing, and achieving a shared understanding of the issues.

It would normally be advisable to meet or speak with the complainant to try to resolve the issue at this initial, informal stage. Care will be taken to ensure that the environment is conducive to constructive discussion. For example, it would not generally be appropriate to ask a person to attend a meeting with all the elders of the church. This would result in a significant level of intimidation which could prevent an impartial and balanced outcome.

Pastoral support should be offered to the complainants and any other party.

A written summary of the discussions, along with any decisions and actions agreed will be kept, a copy of which will be provided to the complainant and a further copy for the church's own records. The complainant will be asked that this record is accurate, and the church's record will be kept securely for future reference.

Please note, this procedure does not prevent issues being discussed over multiple meetings if this is acceptable to both the complainant and the church's representative.

Stage Two: Escalation, Investigation and Appeal process

Where the complainant wishes to bypass stage one, the complaint, once clarified, will be considered by Stephen Fairhall.

If the complainant feels that the issue has not been satisfactorily resolved at **Stage One**, they must formally notify the designated person within 14 days. The complainant must clearly indicate the nature of their concerns and the reason for seeking a more formal response. Where, due to complexity or circumstance, this 14-day period is unrealistic, a longer time frame can be negotiated between the church and the complainants but however this extension must be requested within the 14-day period.

- Unless agreed with Stephen Fairhall, the complainant must set out in writing the details of the complaint including supporting evidence
- Written acknowledgement of receipt of a request for Stage 2 will be provided within 7 days
- The acknowledgement will name a specific contact person and will indicate the timeframe for a decision on how the matter will be handled.
 - Pastoral support will be offered to the complainants and to anyone else concerned.
- The committee/trustees overseeing the complaint will decide on an individual or team to investigate and will define the scope and process of the investigation

- The committee then notify the complainant in writing of the investigation process and anticipated timeframes
 - If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed, and they will be given an opportunity to respond.
 - Written notes of interviews must be taken and held securely.
 - The person against whom the complaint has been made should also be informed at all stages of the investigation and of the outcome.
 - If there are delays to the timeframe, a progress report should be sent as soon as possible to the complainant with an indication of when a full response will be complete.
- 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.

Stage Three : Appeal

- If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the process or outcome of the investigation, they can **appeal the decision** in writing to the **Chair of Trustees** within 28 days of receipt of the outcome.
- The complainant's appeal must clearly state the reasons for the appeal and provide evidence as to why they disagree with the outcome of the investigation.
 - The appeal is NOT a reinvestigation of the original complaint
- The **Chair of Trustees**, supported as required by other nominated individuals, should then:
 - Establish the scope and process of the appeal
 - Review the process and findings of the stage 3 complaint to establish as to whether any further investigation is required
 - Once any necessary inquiries/investigations are complete a final decision will be made on the robustness and reliability of the stage 2 process and findings .
- The outcome of the appeal should be reported back to the committee/trustees who will sign off on the appeal
- The complainant is then notified of the outcome
 - The complainant will be notified of any options to raise the concerns further, these would include a compliant tor referral to the charity commission or statutory services if they believe those thresholds were met
- The decision taken at this stage is final.

Vexatious Complaints

If the church leadership and trustees conclude that a complaint is vexatious (i.e., Unreasonable, and repeated, once the above processes have been exhausted) the church is under no obligation to investigate further the complaint made once all available avenues of resolution have been explored.

Confidentiality and Information sharing

All complaints must be handled sensitively and confidentially. Information concerning the complaint should only be shared on a need-to-know basis, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection procedures or requirements

Policy last reviewed
17/01/2022

Last review conducted / approved by:
Stephen Fairhall