



Complaints Policy and Procedure

PLEASE NOTE:

For concerns or issues relating to the safeguarding of children, young people, or adults at risk please refer to the Safeguarding Policy.

Employees should refer to the grievance procedure in the Staff Handbook.

We hope you will never need to send us a complaint because we work hard to meet the high standards that we set for ourselves. However, sometimes things can and do go wrong and you may wish to make a complaint. We take complaints very seriously and we treat them as an opportunity to listen, learn and improve. This is why we are always grateful to hear from people who are willing to take the time to contact us about their issues, concerns or worries. Our overriding aim is to provide a positive, timely response, to communicate clearly and find a suitable resolution.

In the first instance we would always encourage anyone with a complaint to try to resolve the matter directly with the person they have been dealing with or via their team leader (if appropriate). It may be possible to resolve the issue immediately. If you are unable to do so or if the complaint is of a more serious nature than we have a formal complaints process as set out below. Whether or not the complaint is resolved face to face, details about any complaint should be passed to the Complaints Coordinator within 5 working days to be recorded in our complaints register.

People and Responsibilities

SOUL Church has a General Manager who acts as the nominated Complaints Coordinator. The Complaints Coordinator will work with the person who has made a complaint and any staff member or volunteer involved with the aim of ensuring that the situation is solved promptly and to the satisfaction of all parties. On occasion this may require the involvement from the team leader or manager of the person involved or the Board Member responsible for the relevant area.

Process overview

Our complaints process aims to provide a quick and satisfactory solution. To ensure this, we aim to:

- Make raising a complaint a fair and easy process, taking into account the complainant's preferred method of communication;
- Treat all complaints politely, and where appropriate, confidentially;
- Investigate the complaint fully, impartially, and in a timely manner;
- Respond to the complainant within reasonable timescales;
- Provide clear information and support both to the complainant and to any volunteer or staff member that is the subject of a complaint; and
- Resolve complaints and rebuild relationships successfully whenever possible; and

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- Provide details on escalating the process should the complaint not be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

Complaints Procedure

1. Making a complaint

You can contact us in whichever way is more convenient for you:

- **By phone:** 01603 488880
- **By email:** complaints@soulchurch.com
- **By post:** Complaints Coordinator, SOUL Church Limited, 4 Mason Road, Norwich, NR6 6RF

Please include your name, address and contact telephone number in your email or letter.

2. Complaint details

To ensure we deal with your complaint promptly and accurately we need to know:

- exactly what the problem is and how, when it has occurred - give as much information as possible;
- how it has affected you;
- what you consider should be done to put the matter right; and
- your preferred method of communication so that we can get in touch with you easily.

3. Procedure

Stage One - Complaint

We will aim to acknowledge your complaint within 15 working days. We will record your complaint in our complaints register, attach a copy of this Complaints Policy and between us we will agree on the best way and time to get back in contact with you.

Stage Two - Investigation

We will endeavour to respond fully and conclusively to all complaints within 1 month of our acknowledgement; if we think that the process will take longer then we will let you know and keep you updated of all the progress. The Complaints Coordinator will lead the investigation and ensure that all the complaints are dealt with impartially and promptly. If the complaint is about the Complaints Coordinator, then the investigation will be led by another member of the Senior Leadership Team and their name will be notified to you within our acknowledgement. The Complaints Coordinator (or their replacement) will:

- record full details of the complaint;
- ensure that we record the complaint in our complaints register;
- take the necessary steps to investigate the matter fully, fairly and professionally;
- if the complaint relates to a specific person, inform the relevant person and record their response to the complaint;

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- notify the complainant via the agreed method of communication when the investigation has been concluded or if the matter will take longer than anticipated; and
- if appropriate to do so, notify the complainant of the results of our investigations and what action we have taken to remedy the issue.

Please note that for confidentiality/sensitivity and/or legal compliance reasons we may not always be able to tell you the results of our investigations or what action we have taken in response to a complaint.

Stage Three - Appeal

If you feel that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage Two, you can request via the Complaints Coordinator that the complaint is reviewed at Board level.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Board or Trustees. The request for a Board level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who on the Board will deal with the case and when you can expect a reply.

The Board of Trustees may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case to date, speaking with the Complaints Coordinator and taking external advice as appropriate. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. We will endeavour to conclude the Board level review and reply to you within a month of our acknowledgement. If this is not possible then an update will be sent to you with an indication of when a full reply can be expected. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply should state that the review has been concluded and, if appropriate, state the conclusions of the investigation, and any action taken to remedy the issue.

Please note that for confidentiality/sensitivity and/or legal and compliance reasons we may not always be able to tell you the results of our investigations or what action we have taken in response to a complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

Escalation

We aim to resolve your complaint in an honest, open and satisfactory way. However, if after going through all the stages of our Complaints Procedure above you do not feel completely satisfied by our response then you can contact the following:

The Charity Commission

The Charity Commission, PO Box 1227, Liverpool, L69 3UG
Tel: 08453 000218

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Information about the kind of complaints the Charity Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

Situations where we may not respond to a complaint

On very rare occasions we may choose not to respond to a complaint. These include:

- When a complaint is about something that we have no direct connection to. We may choose to reply but we are not obliged to.
- When someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that we have already responded to.
- When a complaint is being abusive, discriminatory or offensive in their language or manner.
- When a complaint is incoherent or illegible.
- When a complaint has clearly been sent to use and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email. In this instance we can choose whether it is necessary for us to reply or not.

When a complaint is made anonymously we obviously cannot respond to the complainant, but we will investigate the complaint and use the information to improve in any way that we can.

Record Keeping

We will keep a record of each complaint and outcomes for seven years from the date of the complaint.

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