



Complaints Policy

This document sets out policies and processes for making and handling a complaint at King's Church Birmingham. A complaint can be made by anybody associated in any capacity with the church.

This document has been agreed by the Trustee team.

Last revised 31.07.24

1. Who can make a complaint?

Any person accessing the services of King's Church Birmingham, any employee or volunteer can follow our complaints procedure if they have need to. This may be regarding any aspect of King's Church operations or any perceived failure by King's Church to deliver its operations and pastoral care to the level expected and to uphold all the procedures outlined in any other King's Church policies.

2. The difference between a concern, complaint and a grievance?

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

A Grievance may be defined as *"an issue between an employer and an employee about matters of employment"*, in this case the grievance policy in the employee handbook should be followed.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure and we would encourage you that a formal complaint should only be raised after all other methods of resolution have been exhausted.

King's Church welcomes suggestions that will help it to improve the quality of its operations, and all concerns are taken seriously. King's Church would encourage everyone to resolve a concern informally, if possible, by in the first instance, speaking to the person with whom you have a complaint, or to your line manager or a member of the leadership team. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

N.B. This complaints policy only covers complaints it does not cover safeguarding or whistleblowing concerns.

- *Allegations of a safeguarding nature must be dealt with through the safeguarding policies and procedures found on MyChurchSuite.*
- *Allegations of a whistleblowing nature must be dealt with through the whistleblowing policy, found on our website.*

3. King's Church Birmingham's Commitment

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 to make a complaint.

We will ensure all complaints are mediated/investigated fairly and in a timely way, following the policies and processes laid out here:

- Any mediation/investigation of a complaint must adhere to the following procedure in relation to conflicts of interest: *In this context, a conflict of interest would be anything that inhibits or could be seen to inhibit a fair and impartial examination of the complaint. For example: a family relationship (spouse, parent, child, brother, sister); if the complaint was around a particular area of ministry, it can't be mediated/investigated by someone also involved in that ministry area.*
- Any person(s) appointed to mediate/investigate the complaint must have sufficient authority within King's Church.

We will ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and do our best to see that relationships are repaired. The leaders will reflect on the experiences to help improve our policies and processes.

All complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially. Information concerning the complaint will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and processed in accordance with any relevant data protection procedures or GDPR requirements. We reserve the right to involve external parties (including the police and other authorities) and to take legal advice where this is considered necessary.

4. Making a Complaint

We request that you make your complaint in writing. Support can be provided in putting together a formal complaint. Your complaint should include:

Date

Your name and address

The people involved

As many details of the complaint as possible

- *Including the impact it has had on you*

Have you tried to resolve the issue informally? What happened?

What outcome are you seeking?

- *Whilst the charity trustees cannot promise to do what you ask, it would be helpful to understand what you are seeking.*

You will then need to send the complaint via email to: complaints@kingschurchbirmingham.org

5. Response

The complaint will be forwarded to the Leader of King's Church and the Trustees. If your complaint relates to one of these people, then please identify and email a different representative from the Leadership or Trustee Team as appropriate. You will receive acknowledgement when the complaint has been received by the Chair of Trustees (or other designated Trustee or Leadership Team member if appropriate), and a response will be provided within seven days of the acknowledgement.

Full documentation of the complaint will be recorded in the complaints file, including action taken in response to the complaint. At each stage the complainant should be informed of how their complaint is being dealt with. Depending on the nature of the complaint, we may or may not be able to share the details of how the complaint has been responded to. The Complainant will be asked to sign to indicate whether they are satisfied with the outcome or not. If they are satisfied, then no further action is required.

6. Complaints Procedure

Stage One (Can go straight to Stage 2 if requested)

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.

Present at the meeting(s) should be both parties involved and the appointed mediator. Both parties involved will be invited to bring along a friend to support them should they wish to. The mediator should meet the criteria set out in King's Church Birmingham's Commitment, above.

Impartial and confidential pastoral support should be offered to the complainant and any other party involved.

Once the discussions are complete, the outcome needs to be agreed. Possible outcomes would be:

- Resolved: agreement has been reached and any follow up actions clearly agreed, including timeframes for the actions and how completion will be communicated to the complainant.
- Partially resolved: Some of the issues have been resolved or some aspects have been agreed but others could not be resolved.
- Unresolved: agreement could not be reached.

A written summary of the discussions, along with any decisions and actions agreed and areas that are unresolved 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 to confirm that the record is accurate, and the church's record will be kept securely for future reference.

If the matter is not fully resolved, the complainant should be asked whether they wish to escalate the matter to Stage Two. If so, the procedure detailed below (Stage Two) should be followed.

If the complainant does not wish to escalate, the church should consider whether there are outstanding issues that need to be considered formally. (It is possible that the complainant does not wish to escalate for a variety of legitimate reasons, however, issues have been raised are of concern to the church and so they may wish to continue to investigate or address the issues outside the formal process. In such circumstances, a formal record should be kept of decisions taken and actions completed).

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the issue has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they must formally notify the appointed mediator 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 timeframe can be negotiated between the church and the complainants. Any extension must be requested within the 14-day period.

- 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 by the appointed mediator 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.
 - Independent and confidential pastoral support should be offered to the complainants and to anyone else concerned.
 - The contact person and committee/trustee involved in the process will adhere to the criteria set out in King's Church Birmingham's Commitment
- If applicable, the specific person the complaint relates may not be involved in discussions on how to respond to the complaint at this stage. 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/trustee will 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 opportunity to respond.
- Written notes of interviews must be taken and held securely. A copy of which will be provided to the participants and a further copy for the church's own records. The participants will be asked to confirm that the record is accurate, and the church's record will be kept securely for future reference.
- 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 all involved parties, with an indication of when a full response will be complete.
- Whether the complaint is upheld or not the Leadership and Trustee team will be sent the outcome, so that they can reflect and improve what we do and how we do it.
- Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe, where able:
 - the action taken to investigate the complaint,
 - the conclusions from the investigation,
 - and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Three

If either party 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 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 2 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.
- Ensure that King's Church Birmingham's commitment is upheld.
- Due to the size of King's Church Birmingham, it is likely the same team will be responsible for reviewing the appeal. However, wherever possible a different person will be used.
- The outcome of the appeal should be reported back to the committee/trustees who will sign off on the appeal.
- Whether the appeal is upheld or not the Leadership and Trustee team will be sent the outcome, so that they can reflect and improve policies and processes.
- The complainant is then notified in writing of the outcome.
 - The complainant will be notified of any options to raise the concerns further, these could include:
 - b) a complaint or a referral to the charity commission, or
 - c) statutory services if they believe those thresholds were met.

The decision taken at this stage is final.

7. Grace Connection

Grace Connection has no jurisdiction over local church arrangements so can provide advice and support but is unable to take on a judicial role when dealing with complaints.

Grace Connection can, under certain conditions where both church and the complainant agree, provide mediation support.