



Complaints Policy

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Next review date: Aug 2027

Version Control

Date	Version	Name	Description
20/04/2020	1.00		Initial Version
July 2021	1.10	Matt Bell / Gaye Locke	General Review
February 2023	1.20	Gaye Locke	General Review
May 2025	1.30	Gaye Locke	General Review - updated link to CC site
August 2025	1.40	Gaye Locke	Amended to include reference to Fundraising Regulator

Ashwood Church Complaints Policy

This policy seeks to set out Ashwood Church's approach to dealing with complaints. This policy distinguishes between "concerns" and "complaints". If an individual has a general concern they should speak to the relevant person and hopefully remove any mis-understanding or address any issues, ideally face to face or alternatively in writing. Concerns should be dealt with informally. This policy seeks to address "complaints" which are deemed to be more serious in nature; this could be an unresolved escalated concern. Concerns and complaints should be dealt with in a respectful, friendly and kind nature. We value constructive feedback and where improvements can be made we welcome input.

If the complaint relates to a safeguarding issue this is covered separately within our Safeguarding Policy. And if the complaint is made by an employee then this is covered within the Employment Handbook.

Who can bring a complaint?

Complaints may come from anyone for example a person who:

- Is dissatisfied with the service that they have received from a member of staff employed by Ashwood Church or a volunteer working on its behalf
- Is dissatisfied with the way they have been treated by someone acting on behalf of Ashwood Church
- Has a concern relating to Ashwood Church policies or to decisions taken by the Leadership Team or Trustees of Ashwood Church
- Has a serious issue relating to the Ashwood Centre
- Is concerned that the manner in which Ashwood Church is fundraising has caused harm

Process for bringing a complaint

Complaints should be raised initially with the individual who is responsible for the area of the complaint ideally face to face. This could be a team leader, a member of staff, a Senior Leader or a trustee. Assuming the complaint cannot be dealt with informally, it will move to a formal complaint. (see below)

Complaints can be received in person, by e-mail or in writing. It is our policy that we will not investigate anonymous complaints.

Resolving Complaints

If the complaint is towards a volunteer it should be raised with the team leader in the first instance and a member of the Senior Leadership Team informed. If the issue is with the team leader then the complaint should be made to a member of the Senior Leadership team. If the complaint is towards a member of staff then it should be made to a member of the Senior Leadership team or the Chair of Trustees.

If the complaint is towards a member of the Senior Leadership team it should be addressed to the Ashwood Church Council of Reference.

Informal Approach

In many cases a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue, as they may be able to resolve it swiftly if possible and appropriate. Most matters can and should be

resolved informally.

If for example you are dissatisfied with a service you have received, then in the first instance you should tell that member of staff of your dissatisfaction. They should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter and seek to satisfy the concerns where justified. If you are still unhappy, the member of staff will arrange for the concerns to be discussed with a more senior member of staff or leadership team.

If following the informal process you remain dissatisfied or the informal route is inappropriate, then the formal procedure should be followed.

Formal Stage

If you feel that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved during the informal process, or you believe an informal approach to be inappropriate you can raise a formal complaint.

A complaint must be made in writing or email and should set out the following:

- The incidents or actions of the complaint;
- When they took place;
- Details of what you have done to try and resolve your concerns;
- What you consider would resolve your concerns;
- Details of who else you have reported the matter to;
- Any additional information;
- Confirmation that you are happy for detail of your complaint and the supporting documentation to be provided to those who have made the decisions in question.
- Your preferred method of contact and contact details

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Senior Leadership Team or if they have already been involved, the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within 10 working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when you can expect a reply. A copy of Ashwood Church's complaints policy will be attached.

A suitably senior person may be appointed to investigate the facts of the complaint. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the complaint and speaking with anyone who may have been involved in dealing with the complaint at the informal stage. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given an opportunity to respond. The person who dealt with the original complaint at the informal stage should be kept informed of what is happening where appropriate.

Ideally complainants should receive a response within 28 days. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, an update should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should include:

- the action taken to investigate the complaint
- the conclusions from the investigation, and
- any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Where disciplinary action is deemed appropriate, the reply to the complainant will not include details relating to individual staff member's employment record.

It should be recognised that in some instance's complainants may not be happy with either the process or the outcome. Every effort will be taken to prevent this, but in certain circumstances this cannot be avoided.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board of Trustees decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance. A record of the complaint will be kept.

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission should they feel there is a legal issue. The Commission's involvement in looking at complaints is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to a charity's beneficiaries, assets, services or reputation. Information about the kind of complaints the Charities Commission may wish to be involved in can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-charities>

If the complaint specifically relates to fund raising, then the Fundraising Regulator provides information about the type of complaints it can become involved in. Details can be found at: <https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/service/complaints-and-investigations/make-complaint>

Complaints should be sent to:

In writing:

The Senior Leadership Team
Ashwood Church
Portland Street, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, NG17 7AB

Email should be sent directly to the appropriate individual or general complaints to complaint@ashwoodchurch.org.uk which will be re-directed accordingly.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board of Trustees may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively and only shared with the appropriate individuals detailed in this policy and complying with relevant data protection requirements.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.