

ST ANDREW'S HAUGHTON LE SKERNE COMPLAINTS POLICY

Purpose of the Complaints Policy

The primary purpose of this Complaints Policy is to provide a clear and accessible framework for individuals to express dissatisfaction or concerns about products, services, behaviour, processes, or conduct within the church. Such a policy ensures that grievances are handled promptly, fairly, and objectively, and that the organisation learns from feedback to enhance its operations.

Key Objectives

- To offer a transparent process for raising and resolving complaints.
- To ensure all complaints are addressed in a timely and impartial manner.
- To protect complainants from retaliation or negative consequences.
- To uphold standards of fairness, accountability, and respect.
- To enable organisations to identify patterns or recurring issues and improve accordingly.

Scope of the Complaints Policy

This Complaints Policy applies to all internal and external stakeholders: employees, customers, clients, students, suppliers, and the general public. It covers various types of complaints, such as:

- Product or service dissatisfaction
- Unprofessional behaviour or misconduct
- Discrimination, harassment, or bullying
- Health and safety concerns
- Procedural errors or breaches of policy
- Unfair treatment or lack of access to opportunities

However, it is important to distinguish between complaints and appeals, whistleblowing, or grievances, as these may be governed by separate policies.

Principles Guiding the Complaints Policy

This Complaints Policy is built upon the following principles:

- **Accessibility:** The policy must be easy to locate, understand, and use by everyone.
- **Confidentiality:** Information provided in a complaint should be kept confidential as far as possible, in accordance with legal obligations.
- **Impartiality:** The process must treat all parties fairly, without bias or favour.
- **Timeliness:** Complaints should be acknowledged and resolved within reasonable timeframes.

- **Transparency:** The organisation should communicate clearly about how complaints will be managed and the outcomes reached.
- **No Retaliation:** Complainants must be protected from any adverse consequences arising from making a complaint.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Lessons learned from complaints should drive improvements in practices and policies.

Complaint Handling Procedure

Complaints shall be handled according to the procedure below

1. Submission of Complaint

Complaints should be submitted in writing by emailing the church office at office@standrewshaughton.org.uk or by letter to St. Andrew's Church Office, Haughton Green' Darlington, DL1 2DD

Upon receipt of a complaint it should be reported immediately to the Incumbent. The Incumbent will involve other people as required to deal with the complaint. The Incumbent will inform the PCC of the complaint.

2. Acknowledgement

Upon receipt, the Incumbent or other appointed person should acknowledge the complaint promptly, typically within two to five working days, and provide information about the process and expected timelines.

3. Assessment

The complaint will be assessed to determine its nature, seriousness, and complexity and to determine who needs to be involved in the investigation.

4. Investigation

A thorough and impartial investigation should be conducted by a person or persons appointed by the Incumbent. This may involve gathering facts, reviewing documents, interviewing relevant parties, and maintaining detailed records.

5. Decision and Resolution

Based on the investigation, a decision will be made regarding the validity of the complaint and appropriate remedial actions. The outcome should be communicated clearly to the complainant, along with reasons and any steps taken to address the issue.

6. Appeal Process

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution, the complainant may appeal the decision. The complainant must submit their appeal in writing, either by email or letter, clearly stating the reasons they disagree with the decision and the grounds for the appeal.

The Incumbent shall investigate the appeal. The outcome of the appeal should be communicated clearly to the complainant, along with reasons and identifying any additional steps to be taken to address the issue.

Timeframes

The time frame for handling the complaint shall be:

- Acknowledgement: 2-5 working days
- Completion of investigation: 10-30 working days depending on complexity
- Appeal review: Within 10 working days of appeal submission

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Personal information must be handled in line with relevant data protection legislation and our privacy policies. Records should be kept secure and only shared with those directly involved in resolving the complaint.

Accessibility and Support

The complaints process will be accessible to all. Where necessary, support and guidance will be available to complainants throughout the process.

Continuous Improvement

Every complaint represents an opportunity to improve. The PCC will regularly analyse complaint trends, outcomes, and feedback to identify systemic issues and drive changes in policy, procedure, or training.

Policy Review and Updates

This Policy will be reviewed every three years, subject to changes in legal and regulatory requirements.