

# StMM Complaints Policy

Updated: August 2024

## 1. Purpose and Scope

An effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships between the Church members, volunteers, beneficiaries, clients and guests, and other individuals or bodies with whom we interact.

Effective handling of complaints demonstrates our commitment to providing the best possible service. It helps us to find out how things have gone wrong, how to put them right, and to prevent future re-occurrences.

We commit to:

- a) ensuring that everyone is treated equally, regardless of: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation;
- b) providing a fair and easily understood procedure for dealing with complaints ensuring everyone knows how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be handled;
- c) publicising / making known the existence of a policy, together with relevant contact details and procedural guides, and to ensure that all who are responsible for Church affairs understand what needs to be done should a complaint occur;
- d) ensuring that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear time frames and every effort is made to resolve matters satisfactorily for all parties;
- e) ensure that complaints are monitored to improve our services through being used as a source of information for future reference and improvements in process, where appropriate.

This policy covers all staff, and PCC and associated personnel whilst engaged with work or visits related to the Church, including but not limited to the following: consultants, volunteers, contractors, etc. We ask that everyone follows our process and procedures in order to get the best outcome with least complications.

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the PCC.

Our records are kept for 3 years.

If a serious incident takes place, the PCC are required to report what happened to the Commission and explain how it is being managed. An actual or alleged incident must be promptly reported to all the relevant authorities.

## 2. Definitions

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of our operations, whether actions taken or lack of action, justified or not. It can come verbally, by telephone, e-mail, or by letter.

We recognise complaints are different from concerns. Where there is a doubt, it will be treated as a complaint.

We recognise complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. We aim to resolve all complaints in a timely and satisfactory matter for everyone's benefit.

We regard complaints as a source of learning and improvement and when responding to a complaint we will acknowledge if things have gone wrong and take proportionate action to put things right whether an apology or changes to services for example.

### **3. Complaints Process**

- a) Complaints should be made to The Vicar, Matthew Price. Please see contact details below:

Name: The Rev. Matthew Price

Address of Church: Magdalen Square, Gorleston NR31 7BZ

Phone: 01493 494248

Email: matthew.price@stmmgorleston.org.uk

- b) Verbal complaints should be made by phone to or in person to the vicar, a member of the PCC or Community Lead.

- c) Telephoned or verbal complaints must be recorded in writing, with the following details:

- Date and name of the person receiving the complaint;
- Name, address and contact details of the person making the complaint;
- The relationship between the complainant and the church;
- Facts of the complaint.

- d) The person making the complaint must be told:

- that we have a procedure;
- what will happen next; and
- how long it should take to be dealt with.

- e) They should be encouraged to put their complaint in writing so that a record in their own words can be kept.

## 4. Resolving a complaint

- a) Ideally the person complained about should deal with it, if it is possible and appropriate to do so. If this is not appropriate, please contact the Vicar.

Name: Rev Matthew Price

Role: Vicar

Email: matthew.price@stmmgorleston.org.uk

Phone: 01493 494248

- b) Whether resolved or otherwise, the complaint should be passed to the Vicar within 1 week of the occurrence, who must record it in the complaints log.
- c) If unresolved, the issue must be delegated to another PCC member for investigation and action.
- d) Any individual who is the subject of the complaint must be informed and given the opportunity to respond.
- e) The person making the complaint must receive an acknowledgement from the person responsible for the investigation within 1 week, with their estimate of the likely time-frame, and with a copy of the complaints policy.
- f) The person making the complaint should receive a judgement or a progress report within 4 weeks, detailing the action(s) taken in the investigation, any conclusion and action resulting.

## 5. Specific Types of Complaints

### Data Protection complaints

If you wish to complain to the charity about:

- how your personal information has been processed;
- how your complaint has been handled, or
- appeal against any decision made following a complaint.

Please address your complaints to the Data Protection Officer (DPO), or person designated to deal with data protection, Matthew Price (Vicar) as follows:

Name: Matthew Price

Email: matthew.price@stmmgorleston.org.uk

Phone: 01493 494248

### The procedure for handling data protection complaints:

- a) Complaints regarding how your personal information has been processed should be submitted to the DPO, who will acknowledge receipt within 10 working days.
- b) The DPO will review and respond in writing to your complaint, within 20 working days of receipt. If a complaint is complex and we cannot send a full

reply within 20 working days, we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full. If an extension is required, this will be with the agreement of both parties and up to a maximum of a further 28 working days.

- c) If you are dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been handled, then you may contact us, outlining your concerns, and an independent staff member will respond to you within 10 working days, to outline the next steps.
- d) If you remain dissatisfied, you may forward your complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (contact details can be found on their website at: <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/handling/>).

## **Fundraising complaints**

Fundraising complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction at any aspect of the Church's fundraising activities, including administrative practices, procedures, and acts carried out by third party suppliers.

The church is committed to being open and honest in all our dealings with our supporters. It is important that those who give us support in any way, have access to a means of making a complaint. If you have a complaint, please contact:

Name: Anna Price

Role: Community Lead

Email: [anna.price@stmmgorleston.org.uk](mailto:anna.price@stmmgorleston.org.uk)

Phone: 01493 494248

If you are not satisfied with the answer received, the Fundraising Regulator will deal with all complaints that are concerned with a breach of the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice, or a breach of the Fundraising Promise, provided that the complainant has first directed the complaint to the charity concerned.

## **The procedure for handling fundraising complaints:**

- a) Telephone complaints will be logged, and every effort will be made to resolve the matter over the telephone. The complaint will be summarised at the end of a call, and if you are satisfied, that will be the end of the matter; however, the complaint will be included in our annual report to the Charity Commission.
- b) All complaints, either by telephone, post or email, will be acknowledged in writing within 14 days. We will seek to resolve the complaint within 30 working days. At this stage, further contact with you will only be made when we have insufficient details to take the complaint forward.
- c) We will consult with the Vicar and any relevant staff or third parties involved (for example: a supplier, or partner) to inform them of the situation, and gather any relevant information. We will take care to record all the important points and file these with the case.

- d) Having gathered all the relevant information, we will hold an assessment meeting with the Vicar, and the staff/ third parties concerned.
- e) The assessment meeting will set out the nature of the complaint and determine any action that needs to be taken. We will make a note on whether it is about an alleged breach of the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice, and/ or the Fundraising Promise. The Fundraising Regulator will need this information if the complaint is referred to them.

If the complaint is justified we will write to you to apologise, and to reassure you that the complaint will be used to improve on our fundraising activities in the future, and how this will be done. We will also instigate action to prevent any recurrence of the problem.

If the complaint is not justified we will write to you to explain that we will not be changing our fundraising practices and give clear reason(s) for our position.

We always take complaints very seriously and assure you the investigation will always be as thorough as possible. Accurate records will be kept of all the investigations which have been carried out.

### **Contact details for the Fundraising Regulator**

Fundraising Regulator staff are available to assist and advise members of the public, charities and fundraising organisations. The contact details are as follows:

2nd floor CAN Mezzanine Building,  
49-51 East Road,  
London,  
N1 6AH

Phone: 0300 999 3407

Email: [enquiries@fundraisingregulator.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@fundraisingregulator.org.uk)

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-07/Complaints-handling-guidance.pdf>

### **Safeguarding complaints**

Protecting people and safeguarding responsibilities is a governance priority, and the Church takes reasonable steps to protect people who come into contact with our church, from harm.

If you have any concerns about the behaviour of a member of the PCC, leader, staff, volunteer, guest or beneficiary in any situation, it is vital that you tell us about it immediately, so that appropriate action can be taken.

This complaints policy will work alongside the Church's Safeguarding and Whistleblowing Policies.

### **The procedure for safeguarding complaints**

- a) We take all concerns and complaints seriously. If we have an incident or allegation of abuse, we will handle and record it in a secure and responsible way, and in accordance with any legal and statutory obligations.
- b) We will respect your confidentiality and keep your complaint confidential as far as possible. Any information about the complaint will usually only be shared with those who need to know, in order to help resolve it. There may however be occasions when we cannot provide absolute confidentiality; for example, in circumstances where a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm, and any relevant information will be shared with others concerned in the safety and welfare of service users.
- c) We will handle information in line with the Data Protection Act.
- d) We will report to the police if the incident or concern involves criminal behaviour. Where necessary, we will also refer to social services and report to other agencies (i.e. send a serious incident report to the Charity Commission).
- e) If the complaint is received by telephone, we will listen and record the complaint and summarise for the complainant, to ensure that the details are correct. The complaint will then be passed with due haste to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Lead DSL); alternatively, you can make a complaint using your preferred method and format of communication direct to the DSL, whose contact details are as follows:

Name: Anna Heydon

Address: St Mary Magdalene Church, Magdalen Square, Gorleston, NR31 7BZ

Email: anna.heydon@stmmgorleston.org.uk

Telephone: 01493 655523

- f) The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):
- g) will acknowledge your complaint within five days of receipt;
- h) will keep you informed throughout the process;
- i) contact the Vicar for a decision on whether to conduct an internal enquiry, or whether it is necessary to pass to another agency, such as: the police, social services, or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- j) No safeguarding decision will be made in isolation.
- k) The DSL will ask the receiving agency to:
- l) keep the Church informed; and
- m) be included in any strategy meetings which may be held.
- n) The person making the original complaint will be informed if other agencies are involved.
- o) At the end of the process, the complainant, family and alleged perpetrator will be informed of decisions made.

- p) The DBS will be kept informed throughout this process and MUST be informed of the final decision.

## 6. Timelines

### a) Reporting a Complaint

Complaints should be raised as soon as possible after the incident occurs. To ensure we can address concerns effectively, we request that complaints be reported within 1 months of the incident.

Complaints related to ongoing issues may be considered beyond this timeframe, but the sooner we are notified, the better we can address the issue.

### b) Complaints Process Timeline

In order to ensure that our complaints process is prompt and fair and gives the complainant confidence in our handling of their concerns, we will operate within the following timelines:

### c) Acknowledgment

Upon receiving a complaint, we will acknowledge receipt within 3 working days (Monday-Friday).

### d) Investigation

The complaint will be investigated thoroughly. We aim to complete the investigation and provide a response within 14 calendar days of acknowledging the complaint.

### e) Extension

If the investigation requires more time, we will inform the complainant within the 14 day period, providing a reason for the delay and a new timeline for resolution, which will not exceed an additional 28 calendar days.

### f) Resolution

Once the investigation is complete, we will communicate the outcome and any actions to be taken.

## 7. Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively and confidentially, i.e. telling only those who need to know, and with due regard to data protection requirements.

### a) Communication

To ensure clarity and transparency in how we communicate to those who raise concerns, we will follow the following process:

### b) Method of Communication

We will communicate our response to the complainant through their preferred

method of communication, whether that be email, phone, or written letter. This preference should be indicated when the complaint is initially made.

**c) Content of Response**

Our response will include:

- A summary of the complaint.
- The findings of our investigation.
- Any actions we have taken or plan to take as a result of the complaint.
- Information on what to do if the complainant is not satisfied with our response.

**d) Follow-up**

If further action is needed or if there is a need for ongoing communication, we will outline the next steps and provide contact details for the relevant person handling the matter.

**e) Appeal Process**

Should the complainant be dissatisfied with our response, they have the right to appeal. Details of the appeal process, including the timeframe and how to submit an appeal, will be provided with our response.

**f) Escalation Procedures**

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the way it was handled, they have the right to escalate the matter. To do so, the complainant should submit an appeal within 10 working days of receiving our response. The appeal will be reviewed by a senior member of staff or PCC, or a designated appeals panel who was not involved in the original investigation. This review will aim to be completed within 20 working days. If the complainant remains dissatisfied after the appeal, they may refer the complaint to an external body, such as the Charity Commission, depending on the nature of the issue. We will provide guidance on how to escalate the complaint externally if needed.

### **Contact details for the Charity Commission**

The Charity Commission should be contacted where your concerns relate to:

- a) dishonest handling of funds;
- b) misapplication of charitable funds;
- c) actions that contravene the Charity's Governing Document or charity law; and
- d) actions that threaten to bring the Charity into disrepute

Charity Commission Direct  
PO Box 1227  
Liverpool

## 8. Record Keeping

We will maintain detailed records of all complaints and their resolutions to ensure transparency and accountability. Records will include the initial complaint, correspondence, investigation details, outcomes, and any follow-up actions. These records will be securely stored for a minimum of 3 years to facilitate review and ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Access to these records will be restricted to authorised personnel only to protect the privacy of individuals involved. Regular audits will be conducted to ensure the integrity and accuracy of our record-keeping practices.

## 9. Training and Awareness

To ensure effective implementation of our complaints policy, all staff and volunteers will receive training on how to handle complaints professionally and sensitively. This training will cover the complaints process, escalation procedures, and the importance of record-keeping. Additionally, we will regularly update our team on any changes to the policy and provide refresher training to reinforce best practices. Awareness of the complaints policy will be integrated into our onboarding process and reinforced through periodic briefings to ensure that everyone involved understands their role in managing and resolving complaints effectively.

### Approval

This Complaints Policy was given essential approval by the PCC on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July, with minor checks and formatting edits to be made before publishing.

### Review Control

Reviewed By	Date Reviewed	Date of next Review
Anna Price	27 <sup>th</sup> August 2025	September 2026

