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# Complaints Policy

## 1. Introduction

### Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that we handle complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to our staff and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system.

### Scope

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors and the Leadership Team, receiving or managing complaints from members of New Life and from members of the public made to or about us, regarding our activities such as worship, cell groups or outreach events.

### Organisational commitment

New Life Christian Fellowship expects staff and volunteers to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling.

## 2. Terms and Definitions

### Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, our staff or the handling of a complaint.

Complaints may be made directly to our organisation, and some complaints (or at least negative comments) may be made on social media.

## **Complaint handling/management system**

All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.

## **Dispute**

An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

## **Feedback**

Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

## **Grievance**

A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.

# **3.Guiding principles**

An effective complaint handling system must be modelled on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration into organisational culture.

## **We will facilitate complaints**

We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame

People making complaints will be:

- provided with information about our complaint handling process and how to access it
- listened to, treated with respect and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

## **No detriment to people making complaints**

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

## **Anonymous complaints**

We accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so, and we will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

## **Accessibility**

We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised, on our website. We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/ or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish. Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).

Complaining to us is free.

## **Responding to complaints**

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with us.

When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

## **Responsiveness**

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible,

of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frames for our actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

## **Objectivity and fairness**

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

**Confidentiality**

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

# Complaints Procedure

## Introduction

When responding to complaints, staff (paid and volunteer) act in accordance with complaint handling procedures as well as any other internal documents providing guidance on the management of complaints.

We will follow these 5 steps to resolving complaints:

### 1 Receive

Where possible the staff member or leader will try to resolve the complaint immediately. This will most likely occur through listening to the complainant, and understanding the situation surrounding the incident being complained of. It may be that the complainant is satisfied in just being heard.

Even where the complaint has been resolved at the outset, the person receiving the complaint should make a written record with the following:

- Contact information of the person making a complaint and the date received
- Issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want
- Any other relevant information, and
- Any additional support the person making a complaint requires.

This record should be forwarded to the Senior Pastor as soon as possible.

### 2 Acknowledge

We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within 5 working days. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with the person making a complaint.

### 3 Assess and investigate

#### 3.1 Initial assessment

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making the complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- How serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety

- How the person making the complaint is being affected
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

### 3.2 Investigating the complaint

After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it. We may:

- Give the person making a complaint information or an explanation
- Gather information about the issue, person or area that the complaint is about, or
- Investigate the claims made in the complaint.

We will keep the person making the complaint up-to-date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays. We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

## 4 Determine outcome and provide reasons for decision

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:

- The outcome of the complaint and any action we took
- The reason/s for our decision
- The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
  - Any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal review, external review or appeal.

## 5 Close the complaint: document and analyse data

We will keep records about:

- How we managed the complaint
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team will then make any necessary changes to procedures and policies.

# Revisions and Changes

Adopted by Leadership Team: 27/01/2023