

Complaints Policy

What is this policy for?

We seek to serve our church family and our wider community in lots of different ways. We want to serve effectively, but we recognise that sometimes things go wrong or people are unhappy about things that happen, or don't happen as they should.

This policy sets out what should happen when somebody has a complaint about the work of Beeston Free Church Nottingham. It does not create specific methods or processes that people have to use in order to complain or respond to a complaint, but it does set out how we will handle a complaint in a clear and structured way.

Complaints at Beeston Free Church Nottingham

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the work of Beeston Free Church. Anybody can make a complaint.

We are mindful that anybody can make a mistake and we seek to bear with one another in love. Wherever there is a concern about something that has been done, or not done, by Beeston Free Church Nottingham we encourage the people involved to resolve the concern informally first rather than escalating into a formal complaint.

However, we recognise that in some cases a formal complaint is made. This may be because the concern can't be resolved informally, or because the nature of the complaint means it isn't appropriate to address it in an informal way or with the person concerned.

What will be done when somebody makes a complaint

When we receive a formal written complaint **we will acknowledge it**, in writing if at all possible. This shows the person who has complained that we have the complaint and lets them know when we received and started dealing with it. We will send the person a copy of this policy or refer them to it.

We will take it seriously. We will not prejudge the outcome of any complaint. We will always look at what is being complained about and will try our best to understand it from the complainant's point of view as well as from that of any other person or people involved, and we will not make any assumptions before we have investigated.

We will be clear about expectations. We will not promise any outcome before we have properly investigated and dealt with the complaint and considered what we should do.

We will be accountable for what we do and the decisions we take. We will not make any decisions without explaining why, and while we will protect people's privacy, dignity and data, we will be as open as we can with everybody involved. We will record complaints and seek to learn from them. We will always involve at least two people in the complaints process; normally the senior minister or the operations manager will oversee the progress of the complaint unless this is not appropriate, while another individual (usually an elder) will investigate and make a decision on the complaint. We will communicate in ways that work for the person complaining, and seek to make sure that they are kept informed and given opportunities to talk to us about the complaint.

We will be organised. We will make sure that there is a specific person who is responsible for making sure we investigate properly, and for keeping everybody involved informed. We will be careful about confidentiality and dignity. We will respond to the person who has complained within 30 days of their original complaint with an outcome, or to tell them if there is a delay and, if so, when they should expect to hear more.

Other issues around making complaints

If the complaint related to safeguarding, we will also follow our safeguarding policies and we may adjust our complaints procedure, if we need to, to make sure that we comply with the law and guidelines that apply to safeguarding.

If the person who made a complaint is unhappy with the outcome of the complaints process, they can appeal in writing to us within 14 days. The complaint should set out clearly why they are appealing against our decision, and tell us what they think would resolve their concerns.

We have a grievance procedure for our paid staff which forms part of their terms and conditions of appointment, and this policy does not replace that procedure.

If we conclude that the complaint has been made vexatiously or in bad faith, we may:

Tell the person that has complained that this is how we are interpreting their complaints, say why and what this means

Not respond to any or all further complaints from the person if we believe they are also vexatious.

Once a person has made a complaint, they should not discuss or correspond about it any further with any person they have complained about. If they need to discuss the complaint, they should contact the operations manager in confidence.

We will not tell anybody about the complaint or what it contains, except as far as we need to in order to investigate the complaint and reach a decision. If we are aware that the person who has complained has not treated the fact of the complaint or what it contains as confidential we will not be bound to do so. We will ask the complainant to maintain reasonable confidentiality about the complaint so that we can investigate as fully as possible.