

# Complaints Policy



## 1. General policy

- 1.1 The Church Council (trustees) of Emmanuel Christian Centre (ECC) take complaints seriously and commit to deal with all complaints confidentially, timely and appropriately.
- 1.2 Our policy is:
  - To provide a fair complaints policy which is clear and easy to use;
  - To make sure that trustees, volunteers and staff are aware of this policy and know how to handle complaints;
  - To ensure in all cases that complaints are handled using Biblical principles and that wherever possible, disputes and disagreements are amicably resolved and that relationships are restored;
  - To gather information which helps us improve what we do in the future.
- 1.3 All complaints and any associated information provided will be handled sensitively, and in accordance with relevant data protection requirements. However, the trustees reserve the right to involve external parties (including the police and other authorities) and to take legal advice where this is considered necessary.
- 1.4 The overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation rests with the trustees of ECC.
- 1.5 In constructing this policy, the trustees have paid due consideration to the Good Governance Code with the aim that internal and external complaints are handled constructively, impartially and effectively and it learns from mistakes.

## 2. Receiving complaints

- 2.1 Complaints may be addressed to any trustee, minister or house-group leader, either orally or in writing or lodged in the ECC office at Mill Street, Ulverston, LA12 7EB.
- 2.2 Where complaints are received by a member of ECC, complainants will be directed towards a house-group leader or trustee in the first instance.
- 2.3 At the time of receiving the complaint or within any initial response, complainants will be informed of the existence of this policy and provided with a copy if requested.
- 2.4 ECC operates a safeguarding children and vulnerable adults policy. Where complaints refer to people or activities covered by that policy, such complaints will be handled in accordance with both policies. In instances where the policies conflict, those contained in the safeguarding policy will carry precedence.
- 2.5 In the case of complaints made by a parent, guardian or other responsible adult to any member of an ECC children's or youth ministry, these will automatically be passed to the Safeguarding Coordinator or Deputy Coordinator who may or may not be a trustee. Such complaints will then be handled in accordance with the safeguarding children and vulnerable adults policy first.

- 2.6** In certain cases and for the avoidance of doubt, trustees, ministers or house-group leaders may request oral complaints to be repeated in writing and reserve the right to share complaints with other trustees. All received complaints must be shared with at least one trustee in the first instance (usually the Senior Minister if appropriate).
- 2.7** Oral complainants must be informed that certain aspects of oral complaints will be recorded (either at the time or later) including but not limited to:
- The name and contact details of the complainant;
  - The date and time that the complaint was received;
  - The substance of the complaint;
  - Any formal relationship that the complainant has with ECC.
- 2.8** Oral complainants must be informed that although complaints will usually be handled confidentially, the trustees may share these with other trustees or house-group leaders in accordance with this policy.
- 2.9** All complaints, together with any actions undertaken, will be recorded in a complaints log which will be reviewed by the trustees at trustee meetings. Any conclusions and further action required as a result of this review will be formally recorded in the minutes of a trustees meeting.
- 2.10** Where the complaint relates to a specific person, the Senior Minister or other trustees may choose to inform that person of the nature of the complaint and to receive a formal response from them. The complainant's name and any other sensitive information will not be shared with the subject of the complaint unless permission has been given.

### **3. Resolving complaints**

- 3.1** Complaints will be acknowledged by the Senior Minister or another trustee within two weeks of being received, and will include details of who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect to have a response. Any first response should include a copy of this policy if not already provided.
- 3.2** The Senior Minister or trustees will use best endeavours to provide a definitive response within one month of receiving the complaint. If, because of ongoing investigations or for other reasons this is not possible, a progress update will be provided to the complainant within six weeks of receiving the complaint.
- 3.3** A definitive response will include:
- Actions taken to investigate the complaint;
  - Conclusions drawn from the investigation;
  - Actions taken as a result of the investigation.
  - If the complainant is a member of ECC, appropriate Bible verses, pastoral guidance and ECC's values will be referenced.

#### 4. Appeals and escalation

- 4.1 Where the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they should inform the trustees of this dissatisfaction in writing within three months of receiving the response.
- 4.2 Due to the size of ECC it is likely that the same group of trustees that dealt with the original complaint will be responsible for reviewing the appeal. Wherever possible a different trustee will take the lead in investigating the appeal.
- 4.3 As long as this notice of dissatisfaction is received within the timeframe set out in 4.1, the trustees will acknowledge this correspondence within two weeks and will use best endeavours to provide a definitive response within one month. Notices of dissatisfaction that are received outside of that timeframe will be considered at the discretion of the trustees.
- 4.4 This appeal decision will be considered final. At any time, the complainant can complain directly to an appropriate authority such as the Charity Commission, Churches in Communities International or any other regulating body. The information about the types of complaints that the Commission can become involved with are set out on their website. The scope of Churches in Communities International is on their website.

#### 5. Adoption of this policy

- 5.1 The trustees of ECC formally accepted this policy at the trustees meeting held on:

11<sup>th</sup> December 2023

  
Chairman

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