

# COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Policy reviewed and revised: Autumn 2019. By: Natalie Russell. Agreed by PCC: November 2019

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St Kea recognises that from time to time complaints will arise. Our aim is to have a process that is simple to use and understand.

This policy and the procedures outlined here are applicable for complaints that relate to the way we have dealt with both safeguarding and other issues, however if you have a safeguarding concern or believe somebody's wellbeing may be at risk, please consult the section entitled Safeguarding Concerns. St Kea abides by the Truro Diocese Safeguarding Policy.

The Complaints Handling Policy should not be used where a member of staff has a complaint relating to their personal circumstances in the workplace. The St Kea Staff Handbook contains the Grievance and Disciplinary Policy and should be used in such cases. It has clear guidelines for staff to cover whistleblowing.

## What counts as a complaint and a grievance?

A complaint or a grievance may include an allegation that a person has behaved in an unacceptable way:

**A complaint** is a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about an action, or lack of action by a person acting on behalf of the church, or about the policies and procedures of the church.

When the complaint is made by someone who is deployed within the parish, whether paid or unpaid (for instance, Sunday School leaders, servers), it is usually referred to as **a grievance**.

## Informal Procedure: Problem-solving

If it is appropriate, complaints and grievances should be shared with the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, and will hopefully be resolved in this way.

If it is not possible to discuss this directly with the person(s) responsible then further assistance may be sought from the vicar or one of the church wardens. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally.

You have the right to take the complaint further if you are not satisfied. To do this, follow the formal procedure below.

## Formal procedure for a complaint and grievance

Who to direct your complaint or grievance to:

**Complaints and grievances against clergy** are handled through the Clergy Discipline Measure. Complaints or grievances against clergy should be addressed to the chaplain to the Bishop ([chaplain@truro.anglican.org](mailto:chaplain@truro.anglican.org)) or to the Archdeacon of Cornwall (contact details are available via the Truro Diocese website <https://www.trurodiocese.org.uk/contact-us/diocese-of-truro-contacts/> )

**Complaints and grievances against licensed or commissioned ministers** (Readers, Lay preachers) are handled through a separate Diocesan procedure. These complaints or grievances should be addressed to the incumbent of the parish or to the chaplain to the Bishop of Truro ([chaplain@truro.anglican.org](mailto:chaplain@truro.anglican.org)).

Further details of Truro diocesan complaints policy are available on the website:

<https://www.trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/policy-governance/policies-policy-governance/>

**Complaints and grievances against paid staff or volunteers** are handled by the direct line manager of a paid employee, or the volunteer. If, however, the person who is accountable is the subject of the grievance, the grievance should be taken to a churchwarden.

### **Stage 1**

A complaint should be submitted in writing or in person. If it is raised in person it must be documented by the person hearing the complaint and the record must be agreed with the complainant.

The person bringing the complaint has the opportunity to state his or her case; and to be represented, if they wish at any meeting, by a friend or other supporter.

The churchwarden (if a complaint) or line manager (if a grievance) will meet with the complainant to listen to and note the facts of the complaint or grievance. S/he will then give to the subject of the complaint or grievance the facts relating to it. The churchwarden/ line manager will then interview the subject of the complaint or grievance, who may also be represented by a friend or other supporter if they wish, to listen to their response to the complaint or grievance brought against them.

The churchwarden/line manager may then interview any other relevant parties.

The churchwarden/line manager then draws conclusions and informs the complainant and the subject of the complaint or grievance of the outcome, ideally within a week of the complaint or grievance being made.

**If you remain unsatisfied with the outcome, you have the right to appeal this decision. In which case, follow Stage 2 below.**

### **Stage 2**

The complaint or grievance should be put in writing to a churchwarden, who will take the complaint to the PCC. The PCC will form a panel of three of its members who have not been involved in the process before.

The panel will establish why the complainant continues to feel aggrieved, and receive all the documentation from the previous investigation at Stage 1. The panel will then meet with the complainant and his/her supporter, the subject of the complaint or grievance and his/her supporter, and the churchwarden or line manager who investigated the complaint at the first stage. Witnesses may be called.

The panel members will then sit alone to form a judgement and make a decision about the complaint or grievance. They will inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint or grievance of the outcome, within a period of 3 months of the complaint being made. This timescale would apply to internal investigations decided within the parish. Where complaints and investigations involve outside organisations such as the Diocese, or a more serious allegation which may involve the Police and or Social Services we have no control over the time scale.

The decision of the panel representing the PCC will be final.

As a result of an investigation into a complaint or a grievance, it may be necessary to address the matter through the disciplinary procedure.

#### **External stage**

You can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about how to make a complaint to the Charity Commission, and the ground on which individuals can complain, can be found on its website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>.

## **Safeguarding Concerns**

We take seriously the safety and wellbeing of all volunteers, employees, guests and visitors to the church. We pay particular attention to the care of vulnerable adults and children.

If for any reason you have cause for concern over the care and welcome we are providing vulnerable people, please do not hesitate to contact our Safeguarding Coordinator Dr Alan Stanhope 01872 862397 or our Vicar, Rev Marc Baker 01872 260134.

Alternatively you might like to speak with someone outside the parish, in which case contact Sarah Acraman, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser 01872 27435.

**Out of hours please phone 01208 251300 for an urgent safeguarding response from Social Care, or if you believe somebody is at immediate risk of harm please phone the police on 999.**

If you are concerned that someone you know is at risk of, or is being abused, or presents a risk to others, please seek advice from a Safeguarding Coordinator (Dr Alan Stanhope) or report the matter to the Local Authority Social Care Services or the Police without delay.

Local Authority Children's Social Care: 0300 123 1116

Local Authority Adult's Social Care: 0300 1234131