

# Complaints

## Background

Churches are not immune from receiving complaints or challenges.

Christchurch Baptist Welwyn Garden City CIO (“Christchurch”) seeks to be open, transparent and accountable in its ministry and activities. The public’s trust that Christchurch is delivering public benefit is fundamental to the church’s reputation making accountability real, through genuine, two-way communication that celebrates success and demonstrates willingness to learn from mistakes and helps to build trust and legitimacy.

This policy is made publicly available, so that the charity trustees can ensure that both formal internal complaints, from church members, or external complaints, from members of the public, are handled constructively, effectively and in a timely manner. The Charity Governance Code encourages charities to develop a culture of openness within the charity so that the trustees can learn from mistakes and use this learning to improve performance and internal decision making.

## Policy

### Introduction

The primary purpose of the Christchurch complaints procedure is to provide a process for dealing with complaints relating to the behaviour of, or activities and decisions taken by, the church’s staff, charity trustees, or volunteers.

### General Principles

Wherever possible, Christchurch prefers to follow Scriptural principles in reconciling differences. However, on occasions, attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or may not be appropriate. A formal complaints process is available for such cases.

### Can I make a complaint?

Yes. You do not have to be a member of the church to make a complaint. If you believe you have reasonable grounds to make a complaint and you cannot resolve the issue informally or believe it would not be appropriate to do so, you can make a complaint.

### What kind of complaint can I make using this procedure?

You can make a complaint about:

- The services that the church provides;

- The behaviour of a church employee, trustee or volunteer that has affected you or someone for whom you are responsible;
- The application of church policies and procedures, or decisions made by the church, that affect you or someone for whom you are responsible.

What kind of complaints are **not** suitable for this procedure?

Safeguarding concerns relating to child or adult protection.

- Any safeguarding concern should be reported to Christchurch's safeguarding officer following the church's safeguarding procedure, which may be found via the following link <https://christchurchwgc.org.uk/safeguarding/> or by contacting a member of the safeguarding team at [safeguarding@christchurchwgc.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@christchurchwgc.org.uk)

A complaint about the conduct or service of an accredited Baptist Minister, Baptist Minister in Training, Nationally Accredited Baptist Church Worker, or a Nationally Recognised Baptist Pastor.

- This should be made following the procedure for accredited Baptist church workers: [https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/520969/Complaint\\_against\\_Accredited.aspx](https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/520969/Complaint_against_Accredited.aspx)

An employment grievance.

- The church has a staff grievance procedure which is set out in the employee's contract of employment. Employment-related grievances should be dealt with in accordance with that grievance procedure.

How do I make a complaint and how will the church deal with it?

You should submit your complaint in writing using Christchurch's complaints form (see Appendix 1). On receipt of your complaint, Christchurch, acting through its charity trustees, will undertake to respond promptly although the complexity of the complaint might dictate a longer time frame. Please understand that if the police investigate the person who is the subject of the complaint in relation to the same or related matters, the church may not be able to begin or complete the review until the police have completed their investigations.

Please be aware that Christchurch may decide that it is under a duty to report the matter to statutory authorities or the Charity Commission. If this is the case, the church will write to you to tell you this.

Christchurch will treat the facts and content of your complaint carefully and in line with the church's data protection policy which you may view via the following link:

<https://christchurchwgc.org.uk/data-protection/>. However, on occasion, Christchurch may need to make a public statement about the subject matter of the complaint, report it to statutory authorities or seek professional advice, and consequently the church cannot guarantee to keep your complaint confidential. You should maintain reasonable confidentiality as to the nature and content of your complaint, other than to seek professional advice if required. Once you have submitted your complaint and while the matter is being reviewed, you should avoid communicating with the person complained about.

If you are unhappy with how Christchurch deals with your complaint, you may choose to contact the Charity Commission, the regulator of charities, using the following form:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-aboutcharity/>

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## Change Record

Change:	Changed By:	Comments:
04/11/2024	Approved	Policy approved by the Trustees

Appendix 1

<b>Christchurch Baptist Welwyn Garden City CIO (“Christchurch”) Complaints Form</b>
<b>Your details</b>
Name:
Address:
Phone:
Email address:
<b>Details of your complaint</b>
Date(s):
Person(s):
Complaint about: <i>(Briefly describe the nature of your complaint)</i>
<b>Supporting information:</b>
<i>State the matter or name of the person who is the subject of the complaint, what happened, when and where. Provide the contact details or statements of any witnesses. Include any additional information that you think would be helpful. If complaining about a decision, explain what the decision was about, when it was taken, and who made it. Explain what impact this decision has had, or you may fear will have, and upon whom. Provide any additional information that you believe would be helpful.</i>
Have you tried to resolve this matter informally? Yes _____ No _____ <i>Explain briefly why you decided not to try to resolve the matter informally.</i>
If you tried to resolve this matter informally, what happened? <i>State who you dealt with, when and where, what information you provided to them, and what you felt was unsatisfactory about the outcome.</i>
<b>Action sought:</b> <i>Describe what actions you want the church to take. While the charity trustees cannot promise to do what you ask, it would be helpful to understand what you are seeking.</i>

*The church will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the church's data protection policy [insert link to church data protection policy]. The church cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your complaint confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share your data in order to review and resolve your complaint.*

**Date you submitted your complaint to the church:**

*Please forward this form, duly completed either by email to [info@christchurchwg.org.uk](mailto:info@christchurchwg.org.uk) or by post to the Church Administrator at Christchurch Baptist, 20 Tewin Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL7 1BW*