



Complaints Policy & Procedure

Policy Statement

The United Reformed Church (the Church) aims to maintain high standards in all that we do but recognise that we can sometimes get things wrong, despite best intentions.

We view a complaint as an opportunity to put things right for the person making the complaint, and to address behaviours and improve practice. Enabling individuals to voice concerns or make complaints when necessary is part of a listening and learning process that will help us to continuously improve.

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to enable the Church to resolve non-ministerial complaints quickly and fairly, where possible, without recourse to formal investigations or external bodies. The aims of this policy are:

- to provide a clear and fair procedure for individuals to make a complaint about us, our services, our employees, or contractors;
- to ensure that everyone working for or with the Church knows how to handle any complaints made;
- to ensure that all complaints are handled equally and in a fair and timely fashion;
- to ensure that important information is gathered from complaints and used to avoid such situations arising in the future.

Scope

This policy applies to anyone who comes into contact with the Church's employees during the course of their work, or engages with services provided by them.

It does not apply to:

- individuals who are employed by the Church who have complaints about other employees – such matters are dealt with under our HR policies and procedures.
- Matters relating to RMHS as this is dealt with under their complaints policy.
- those who occupy roles as stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers.
- Safeguarding concerns. If concerns are regarding safeguarding issues, these should be addressed to the Head of Safeguarding at safeguarding@urc.org.uk

1. Making a complaint

1.1 All complaints should be made in one of the following ways:

1.1.1 In writing addressed to the Chief Operating Officer at The United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9RT;

1.1.2 By email addressed to victoria.james@urc.org.uk;

- 1.1.3 By contacting us by telephone on 0207 916 2020.
- 1.2 When making a complaint you will be required to provide the following information in as much detail as is reasonably practicable:
 - 1.2.1 Your name, address, telephone number and email address;
 - 1.2.2 The complainant's name and contact details if you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else;
 - 1.2.3 Any reference numbers, if you are making a complaint about a particular transaction (e.g. invoice number).
 - 1.2.4 The name and role of the individual, if you are making a complaint about a member of staff, or a contractor;
 - 1.2.5 Particular details of the complaint: dates, times, events, people involved, as appropriate;
 - 1.2.6 Details of any documents or other evidence to support your complaint;
 - 1.2.7 Details of how you would like the Church to resolve your complaint and to put things right. Whilst we will make every reasonable effort to accommodate such requests, we are not bound to take any action beyond that which we may be contractually or otherwise legally obliged to take.

2. Handling your complaint

- 2.1 The Church operates a two-stage complaint handling procedure. Our aim is to always resolve complaints informally to your satisfaction at stage one without further recourse to stage two.
- 2.2 **Stage One**
 - 2.2.1 Upon receipt, your complaint will be logged and receipt of the complaint acknowledged in writing within five working days;
 - 2.2.2 The person handling your complaint will be provided; this may be the person to whom your complaint was directed, or it may be assigned to another appropriate member of staff;
 - 2.2.3 The person handling your complaint will contact you, where possible, within ten working days to discuss a possible resolution;
 - 2.2.4 Any resolution agreed will be confirmed in writing.
- 2.3 **Stage Two**
 - 2.3.1 If it has not been possible to resolve the complaint informally at stage one, or you are not happy with the resolution, you can escalate your complaint to stage two;
 - 2.3.2 Upon receipt, your complaint will be logged and receipt of the complaint acknowledged in writing within five working days;

- 2.3.3 The person handling your complaint will be provided; this may be the person to whom your complaint was directed, or it may be assigned to another appropriate member of staff;
- 2.3.4 The complaint handler will contact you, where possible, within ten working days to discuss a possible resolution;
- 2.3.5 An investigation will be undertaken which may involve a face-to-face meeting, where appropriate;
- 2.3.6 At any formal meeting, you may be accompanied by an appropriate person (such as a close family member); the church reserves the right to request an alternative companion if the chosen person is deemed inappropriate;
- 2.3.7 The Church will take a written record of the meeting. An electronic recording of any meeting is not permitted, without express permission;
- 2.3.8 Where the complaint concerns an individual, that person will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation;
- 2.3.9 The individual about whom the complaint is made will have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative at any formal meeting, at all stages of an investigation;
- 2.3.10 No parties are entitled to legal representation under this procedure;
- 2.3.11 At the conclusion of stage two, you will be provided with full details of our investigation, our conclusions from it and any action taken as a result.
- 2.3.12 We aim to resolve complaints under stage two within twenty-eight days.

3. Appeals

- 3.1 You have the right to appeal our decision at the conclusion of stage two.
 - 3.1.1 You may submit an appeal in writing within ten working days from receipt of the stage two outcome;
 - 3.1.2 Appeals should be directed to the original complaint handler, who will forward your appeal to an appropriate appeal handler.
 - 3.1.3 Appeals are handled by the General Secretary or a designated Deputy General Secretary, who will acknowledge receipt within five working days.
 - 3.1.4 At the conclusion of the appeal, you will be provided with full details of the appeal decision. Our decision on appeal is final.

4. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 4.1 All complaints and information relating thereto are treated with the utmost confidence. Such information will only be shared with those individuals who

need to know in order to handle your complaint.

- 4.2 All personal information and sensitive data (including, but not limited to) your name, address and contact details will be collected, used and held in accordance with UK data protection law (including but not limited to, GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003) and your rights thereunder, as set out in our Privacy Notice <https://urc.org.uk/privacy-notice/>
- 4.3 We may ask your permission to use details of your complaint for internal training and quality improvement purposes.

5. Further information

- If your complaint is about any aspect of our charitable work (other than our fundraising work or activities) you may wish to contact the Charity Commission. However, we ask you to consider whether it is appropriate to contact the Charity Commission before ourselves. The Commission has guidance on its website when to direct complaints to a charity and not the commission:
<https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/raising-concerns/>
- If you believe there is criminal activity within a charity you should inform the police.
- If a complaint relates to your personal data, it may be appropriate to contact the Information Commissioner's Office <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

Policy Owner

Any queries regarding this policy should be addressed to the Chief Operating Officer.

Policy Approved by

This policy was approved for use by the Resources Committee on 21st November 2025.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed 24 months from the date of approval.