

Chapel A

Complaints Procedures



Date: September 2020

Review Date: September 2023

1. Introduction and purpose

1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to provide a clear process for dealing with concerns/complaints relating to decisions taken by its staff, trustees or committees, including those who are appointed on a voluntary basis.

1.2 Chapel A will deal with any concerns/complaints raised by members or non-members relating to;

- The application of policies and procedures in relation to the life of the church
- The conduct of trustees and others who are appointed to service on a voluntary basis on boards, committees and working groups
- Grievances relating to employment decisions
- The conduct of staff employed by Chapel A (other than complaints relating to accredited Baptist Ministers, which should be directed to the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB))

1.3 Chapel A acknowledges that at times errors can occur and wants to ensure that individuals within the church community are able to raise any concerns and are confident that they will be acknowledged, investigated fairly and any learning identified and addressed. Our desire would be that, wherever possible, concerns are resolved informally rather than them escalating into a formal complaint.

1.4 We recognise that in some cases there will be no alternative but to resort to a formal complaint. This formal procedure should only be instigated when attempts to resolve the issue informally have failed or where, due to the nature of the complaint, it is not appropriate to address it with the person(s) about whom the complaint is made.

2. Complaints process

2a A complaint must be made in writing and sent via letter or email to leaders@chapela.org.uk. (If the complaint relates to a leader email, office@chapela.org.uk) Please include as much detail including;

- The issues you are complaining about;
- When they took place;
- Why you think the actions are wrong;
- Details of what you have done to try and resolve your concerns;
- What you consider would best resolve your concerns;

2b The complaint will be acknowledged in writing or by email within 5 working days (excluding weekends).

2c A Chapel A trustee/trustees (1 -2 individuals depending on the nature of the complaint) will be identified as an investigator of the complaint. You will be told who has been appointed to investigate and the timescale for commencement of the investigation.

2d The investigator will:

- Establish what has happened, when it happened and who else was involved;
- Meet with the complainant to understand more details of the concerns
- If applicable, inform those to whom the complaint relates to about the nature of the allegations made (unless in the opinion of the investigator(s) this would prejudice the investigation interview);
- Interview those involved and those complained about where necessary, to understand their account of events

2e The investigator will aim to address the complaint within 28 days. If this timescale is likely to be exceeded for any reason, an updated timescale will be discussed and agreed with the complainant. Any complaints relating to safeguarding or referred to the police may take longer and need outside organisations' input.

2f Complainants will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation. If previously agreed, a second meeting may be arranged to provide feedback

Notes:

If the investigator(s) meet with the complainant(s) in their home or a private room then it is advisable for 2 investigators to meet with the complainant(s). Written notes should be agreed by both investigators.

If the person investigating concludes that the evidence suggests that misconduct may have taken place, the issue will be referred back to the board of Trustees who will chair a panel of three trustees unconnected with the matter under investigation to consider the evidence and to come to a decision.

Appeals process

3a If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, complainants have the right to appeal any decision.

3b Written notice of intention to appeal should be made within 14 days of the date the outcome of the complaint was sent to the complainant. The appeal itself should be made within a further 14 days.

3c The appeal should be in writing and must be sent to office@chapela.org.uk who will arrange for the appeal to be considered by someone other than the person who undertook the initial investigation.

Additional Guidance

4a Once a formal complaint has been made, the complainant should avoid any ongoing discussion or correspondence with the person(s) complained about relating to the complaints without the consent of the investigator(s).

4b The facts and content of the complaint will be kept confidential and any information documented will be stored in a secured electronic folder visible only to the Trustees. This information will be stored for a period of 10 years and may be shared in confidence if it is pertinent to other investigations.'

4c Equally complainants would be expected to maintain reasonable confidentiality as to the nature and content of their complaint so that the investigation is able to be completed.