



Complaints Policy

Issue Date: May 2023

Registered charity: 1158254

1. GENERAL STATEMENT

King's Church Guildford ("KCG") is committed to its mission of 'building God's church, with God's word for God's glory'. We want to honour the Lord in all we do. That said, despite our best efforts, there may be a time when you need to complain. This complaints policy is for those who are unhappy about matters for which KCG is responsible that have affected them.

If your complaint is of a safeguarding nature and relating to children or vulnerable adults, please contact our Safeguarding Team – safeguarding@kcg.org.uk.

2. MAKING A COMPLAINT

A complaint is negative feedback, a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction. This includes:

- an action or lack of action;
- a statement; and/or
- upsetting or unacceptable behaviour.

KCG will look into all complaints raised but reserves the right to refuse to investigate any complaints that are vague or vexatious in nature.

When complaining about a person's action or behaviour, in the first instance and if at all possible, please endeavour to speak directly to the person whom the complaint is about. It may be that there has been a misunderstanding which can be quickly rectified. If this is not possible or has not resolved the complaint, then follow the steps below.

A) Stage One (Informal)

We would encourage an informal approach. The aim is to resolve the situation speedily and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and/or negotiation. It is likely that this may resolve the situation without minimising or ignoring the concerns expressed.

Who should I speak to?

The person making the complaint should speak to one of the following;

- The team leader, volunteer or person deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction/concern; or
- The Pastor or another member of staff; or
- An Elder/Trustee.

The complaint does not have to be in writing at this stage.

How your informal complaint will be dealt with

The recipient should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter and seek to satisfy any justified concerns. This should be done immediately where possible and certainly within 7 days.

Solving the problem should be a two-way process so that:

- the recipient lets the complainant explain the problem and what they would like done about it; and
- the complainant listens to the recipient's response.

Keeping a Record

Even if it was informal, the recipient should keep a record of how they dealt with the problem (see Appendix A). This record will be sent to safeguarding@kcg.org.uk and securely stored.

The record should include:

- what the problem is about - facts, circumstances and any relevant background information;
- what you did and when (such as have an informal chat);
- what was discussed in any informal chat/meeting; and
- any next steps agreed - it's a good idea to make sure next steps are clear, specific and measurable. For example, 'person A will do action B by date C, because of reason D'.

Follow up

Within a month, you should ask the complainant if the problem is now resolved for them. If it is not, you could:

- check any next steps have been completed;
- set up more informal discussions;
- find out if anything else can be done; and
- arrange for concerns to be discussed with one of the Leadership Team.

Following the informal process, if the complainant remains dissatisfied or the informal process is inappropriate, then the complaint will need to be escalated to the formal process.

B) Stage Two (Formal) - written complaint

The complainant needs to put their concern into writing by letter or email. The written document should be sent / given to the Pastor or one of the other Elders/Trustees. Please use our publicised office or email address (as above).

The written document should not be abusive or inflammatory. The written document should clearly include:

- full name and address;
- that this is a formal complaint;
- what went wrong, how it has affected you with sufficient details to show why you are aggrieved;

- details of what has already been done informally to try and bring resolution; and
- what (if anything) you think the Church should do to put it right (although we cannot guarantee this outcome)

If someone else complains on your behalf, the Elders/Trustees will need written confirmation from you saying that you agree for that person to act on your behalf.

All communication throughout this process will be stored in a secure place.

How your formal complaint will be dealt with

The recipient will ensure that your complaint is:

- treated seriously;
- handled fairly without bias or discrimination; and
- treated confidentially, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

The Elder/Trustee will write / email to confirm receipt of your complaint within 7 days of its receipt. Arrangements will then be made for your complaint to be considered by all the Elders/Trustees. If your complaint refers to particular individuals who are also on the Eldership/Trustee Team, it will meet without them being present.

The Elders/Trustees will look fairly into your complaint including seeking the views on the matter from any individuals, whether members of the Elders/Trustees or otherwise, to which your complaint refers.

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

The Elders/Trustees may invite you to present your complaint to them. The complainant may bring a supporter to this meeting. However, the supporter must understand their role is one of passive support and that the situation is confidential.

The meeting should be held as informally as possible. The Chair will explain the purpose of the meeting, introduce the members and emphasise confidentiality. Minutes of this meeting will be taken by an Elder/Trustee and will be available for you if you would like them.

The Elders/Trustees will write to you with an outline of the findings, conclusions and decisions from the review and reasons for that outcome. This will be subject to the normal rules on confidentiality of personal information. Please be aware that the outcome may not be the one you want.

They will aim to respond to you in this way as soon as possible, and no longer than two months after the receipt of your complaint. However, if the investigation cannot be fully completed

in the time limit, a progress report containing an indication of when a full reply can be expected, should be sent.

This will be KCG's final response to your complaint. Their decision at this stage will be final unless the Elders/Trustees decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

Support and Pastoral Care

We are aware that needing to submit a complaint, receiving a complaint against you or investigating a complaint can be a stressful and difficult time. We will offer and provide pastoral care to support you. We will endeavour to attain repair and reconciliation for the parties involved.

Right of Appeal?

There is no right for complainants to appeal against the outcome of the investigations into KCG staff, elder, trustee or volunteer conduct. This is because we believe that all individuals in these groups who are under investigation need certainty that if an investigation has been finished, it will conclude the matter. However, if new evidence comes to light that has not previously been submitted this should be provided to the investigator who will determine whether further investigation is necessary.

Confidentiality

KCG will treat the facts and content of your complaint carefully and in line with KCG's data protection policy. However, on occasion, KCG 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 KCG cannot guarantee to keep your complaint confidential. However, your personal identity will not be disclosed.

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 particular person regarding the complaint.

A complaint against a worker (employee or volunteer)

If the allegation is very serious and contravenes an employed person's contract of employment or volunteer agreement, the procedure may lead to disciplinary procedures being initiated. The details of the situation will be investigated and may result in dismissal or further supervision for the worker.

The disciplinary measures may begin at the end of the complaints procedure or may start straight away depending on the circumstances. This procedure may be implemented

regarding a person's conduct outside KCG where there is concern about the impact upon their work/employment or may bring KCG into disrepute.

If you remain dissatisfied

If you remain dissatisfied, you may consider contacting the Charity Commission by which KCG is regulated. The Charity Commission can be contacted via their website <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity> .

APPENDIX A – RECORD OF COMPLAINT

The below is a suggested template for record keeping of any complaint. This should be tailored appropriately to the circumstances.

Factual Summary

The record should include:

- what the problem is about - facts, circumstances and any relevant background information
- what you did and when (such as have an informal chat)

- what was discussed in any informal chat/meeting;
- any next steps agreed - it's a good idea to make sure next steps are clear, specific; and measurable. For example, 'person A will do action B by date C, because of reason D'.
- if the person does not view the complaint as having been resolved, summarise further agreed steps and dates.

Documents to be maintained

Copies of all emails/whats app/texts/notes of meetings should be kept and sent to safeguarding@kcg.org.uk.

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www.kcg.org.uk

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