

Complaints and Grievance procedures policy.



Registered Charity No. 1193766

Introduction

Harnham Parish is committed to providing the best possible relationships with those who work in both paid and voluntary roles (those holding an unremunerated office) within the parish.

We recognise that we can all make mistakes and aim to resolve complaints as effectively and efficiently as possible.

We aim to provide a clear way of raising any complaints or grievances and to achieve the best possible resolutions.

Section 1 What counts as a complaint and a grievance

Section 2 Problem solving

Section 3 Formal procedures

1. What counts as a complaint and a grievance?

A complaint is a written or verbal 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.

A grievance is when the complaint is made by someone who is deployed within the parish, whether paid (e.g. an employed or self-employed administrator or youth worker) or holding an unremunerated (or volunteer) office (e.g. Messy Church leaders, Sunday Wardens) and where the complaint relates to their role.

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

Complaints or grievances against clergy are handled through the Clergy Discipline Measure. Complaints or grievances against clergy should be addressed to the archdeacon or the bishop.

Complaints or grievances against licensed or commissioned ministers (for example, LLMs) are handled through a separate Diocesan procedure. These complaints or grievances should be addressed to the Incumbent of the parish.

Complaints or grievances against a Churchwarden should be addressed to the Incumbent who will take the necessary actions.

Grievances should be submitted in writing to the line manager of the person concerned or the Incumbent if it concerns their line manager.

All other complaints should be submitted in writing to the Incumbent or to a Churchwarden.

At all stages of an investigation, and if any hearing panel is involved, the content and process of the investigation is to be kept confidential and not to be discussed with any person not directly involved in the investigation or the hearing.

2. Problem-solving

The aim always, when responding to complaints and grievances, is to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily, and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation. Problems should therefore be brought direct to the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet and will hopefully be resolved in this way.

If, however, a complaint or grievance relates to or includes an allegation that a child or adult who may be vulnerable has been harmed or is at risk of harm, or that an adult or another child may have caused harm to a child or adult who may be vulnerable, it must be responded to through the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) using the parish procedures for handling allegations of abuse. Please see the Safeguarding Policy.

If the complaint or grievance does not concern a child or adult who may be vulnerable, and the person bringing it is not satisfied with the outcome at the problem-solving stage, they may then invoke a formal procedure.

3. Formal procedure for complaints and grievances

Stage 1

Complaints

- On receipt of a complaint the Incumbent or Churchwarden to whom the complaint has been made will arrange to meet with the complainant to listen to and note the facts of the complaint. A record of this meeting will be kept, recording all the relevant facts and evidence; a copy of this will be given to the complainant who must agree that the record is an accurate statement of the complaint.
- The Incumbent or Churchwarden may then interview any other relevant parties and record the outcome of the interviews.
- The Incumbent or Churchwarden will reach a decision and inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint of the outcome of the investigation orally and in writing. This should be done ideally within ten days of the complaint being made (subject to the availability of all parties concerned).

Grievances

- A grievance should be submitted in writing to the person to whom the person bringing the grievance is accountable; this will be the direct line manager of a paid employee, or the person responsible for coordinating the work of a volunteer. (See Appendix A). A list of who is responsible is found on job or role descriptions.
- If, however, the line manager or coordinator is the cause of the grievance, the grievance should be taken to the Incumbent or a Churchwarden.
- The person receiving the grievance should acknowledge receipt straight away in writing.
- The person bringing the grievance will have the opportunity to state their case and to be represented or accompanied, if they wish, at any meeting by a friend or other supporter.
- The line manager, coordinator, Incumbent or Churchwarden (as appropriate) will meet with the person bringing the grievance to listen to and note the facts of the grievance. They will then give to the person who is the subject or cause of the grievance the facts relating to it.
- The line manager, coordinator, Incumbent or Churchwarden will then interview the person who is the subject or cause of the grievance, who may also be represented by a friend or other supporter if they wish, to listen to their response to the grievance brought against them. The

line manager, coordinator, Incumbent or Churchwarden may also interview any other relevant parties as they deem necessary or appropriate.

- The line manager, coordinator, Incumbent or Churchwarden will make a decision and inform the person bringing the grievance and the person who was the subject or cause of the grievance of their decision orally and in writing ideally within 10 days of the grievance being brought.

Stage 2

- If any party is not satisfied that the Stage 1 decision has adequately resolved the matter, they may set out their reasons in writing to the Incumbent or a Churchwarden, who will refer the matter to the Parochial Church Council (PCC). The PCC will appoint a Panel of three of its members who have not been involved in the process before to include a Churchwarden or the Incumbent or the Vice Chair of the PCC (who shall chair the Panel) and two other members.
- The Panel will consider all the documentation provided during the Stage 1 investigation. The Panel will then meet with the person bringing the complaint or grievance and their supporter, the subject of the complaint or grievance and their supporter, the line manager, coordinator, Incumbent or Churchwarden who investigated the complaint at the first stage and any other person whom the Panel consider it necessary or helpful to hear from.
- The Panel will then sit alone to form a judgement and decide about the complaint or grievance. The Panel Chair will inform the complainant or the person bringing the grievance and the person who was the subject or cause of the complaint or grievance of the Panel's decision in writing, within one month of the Stage 2 process being commenced.
- The decision of the Panel representing the PCC will be final.

Policy adopted by PCC on:

Date for Policy review:

Appendix A

Role/ Job

Administrator
Organist/s
LPAs
Messy Church team member
Hall cleaner
Sunday Wardens
PSO
Clergy
LLMs
Church Army Officers licenced to parish
Church wardens

Line Manager

Incumbent
Incumbent
Incumbent
Messy Church team leader
Hall manager as nominated by Incumbent
Church Wardens
Incumbent
Archdeacon
Incumbent
Incumbent
Incumbent