

Complaints Policy

1 Background

THE WELLS CHURCH views complaints as an opportunity to learn & improve for the future, as well as a chance to try to put things right for the person [or organisation] that made the complaint.

2 Policy Overview

Our policy is:

- 2.1 To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- 2.2 To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- 2.3 To make sure all leaders in our organisation know what to do if a complaint is received
- 2.4 To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- 2.5 To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and relationships are repaired
- 2.6 To gather information which helps us to improve what we do going forward

3 DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of our organisation.

4 WHERE COMPLAINTS COME FROM

Complaints may come from members of the public, or individuals and other organisations. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use our Discipline and Grievance policies.

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

5 RESPONSIBILITY

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Church Council.

6 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Concerns and disputes should be resolved relationally and in good grace between the people concerned, as set out in biblical teaching. Reconciliation and forgiveness is expected to be part of church life and relationships. Where this has been attempted and has not resulted in a resolution, a complaint may be brought under the following procedure.

- 6.1 Complaints should be brought personally at first, to the leader responsible for the area of church activity concerned (eg Church Administrator, Life Group Co-ordinator, Youth or Children's leader). In the case of a complaint against a member of staff, the complaint should be brought to the Senior Pastor, Stuart Mayho, stuart@thewellschurch.org. Any meeting should be with the aim of understanding and resolving the concern at this stage. If desired the complainant may be accompanied. A note should be agreed, summarising the complaint, the date, who was present, and the agreed outcome. This note will be passed to the church Operations Manager, so that the church can learn any lessons required.

- 6.2 If, after discussing any concerns with the ministry leader, the complainant remains dissatisfied they can make a formal complaint. Formal complaints must therefore be made in writing by letter or e-mail to the Senior Pastor Stuart@thewellschurch.org or to the Operations Manager helen.nevison@thewellschurch.org).

If the complaint is against either of the senior staff members above, then the complaint should be addressed and sent to the other member of the senior staff or chair of the church council ian.martin@thewellschurch.org above.

- 6.2.1 In order to avoid ambiguity, the complainant should make it clear at this stage that they wish it to be taken as a formal complaint by stating so clearly in the first line of the letter or email.

- 6.2.2 Suggested Format:

Begin your letter stating that “I am writing to make a formal complaint. This complaint is regarding...” and then detail your specific concern. Detail the incident or series of events that give context to the complaint, with dates. Explain what actions you have taken to attempt to resolve this complaint (if any) prior to this formal communication, as per 6.1 and 6.2 of this policy. Indicate the outcome you are seeking (however, complainants should note that the outcome may be different from the one sought). Attach or include appropriate evidence, where possible. Ensure you include your preferred method of contact and your contact details. A member of the senior church staff will respond personally within 10 days.

- 6.2.3 If complaints or comments are received that do not meet the criteria outlined above, or are not intended to be formal complaints, the Church retains the right to deal with those comments via its formal process if deemed appropriate.

- 6.3.4 If the senior Church staff are unclear on any point in the complaint they will contact the complainant to seek clarification, in order to give full consideration to all the points they wish to make.

- 6.2.5 If the investigation involves a meeting with the complainant, the complainant may have an appropriate representative (family member or friend) of their choice present to support them. The complainant must give notice of the name and relationship of this person prior to the meeting. The investigator also may have another senior member of the staff team, or a member of the Leadership Team to accompany them. Minutes of each meeting must be agreed afterwards by both parties.

- 6.2.6 The senior staff team will aim to send a full response to the complainant within 30 working days of receiving the complaint. This response should also be sent to the Church Council. However, in some circumstances, for instance where the issues are particularly complex or where it is a particularly busy period of the year, then the response may take longer. If this is likely then the investigator will write to the complainant with a revised timescale at the earliest opportunity.

7 APPEALS

- 7.1 If the complainant is unhappy with the initial decision, the complainant may lodge an appeal against the decision or outcome. In this instance, two or three Church Council members will form a 'working group' and will undertake an independent review of the findings following similar timescales as described in section 6.2. They will write to the complainant and to the Church Council within 10 working days of the appeal, and will aim to send a full response to the complainant, the investigator and the Church Council within 30 working days.
- 7.2 If the appeal is found to be justified, the appeal panel will agree to any necessary further action and inform the complainant where appropriate.
- 7.3 The decision of the appeal panel is final and no further appeal is possible.

Policy adopted: ___4th September 2024_____

Signed: _____ On behalf of Church Council

Review Date: ___September 2028_____