



Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about an action, or lack of action by a person acting for or on behalf of Hope Church Ipswich (HCI), or about the policies and procedures of HCI.
- 1.2 Complaints might arise from any aspect of church life and may include dissatisfaction arising from, for example -
 - An allegation that a person has behaved in an unacceptable way.
 - Poor communication
 - Inappropriate information sharing or use of information and communications technology / social media
 - Poor or inconsistent application of HCI policies or procedures
- 1.3 When a complaint is made by someone who is employed by HCI, or who is a temporary or potential employee, it is usually referred to as a grievance and the grievance policy should be followed.
- 1.4 HCI has a Children and Adults at Risk: Protection & Safeguarding Policy which should be followed with respect to safeguarding concerns or allegations. HCI also has a whistle-blowing policy. HCI elders and trustees endorse the right and duty of anyone with a concern within the scope of that policy to “blow the whistle” internally within HCI or externally by contacting for example, the police, social services, local authority or other appropriate body.
- 1.5 Where individuals with concerns are unsure which policy is applicable they should seek advice.

2. Background, purpose and principles

- 2.1 HCI believe it is central to the teaching of Jesus that those who have been reconciled to God, by His grace, should seek reconciliation with those who have offended them or those they have offended. Reconciliation involves clarification of what has happened, how it is perceived by the other person and acknowledgement of the potential for anger and hurt.
- 2.2 It is recognised however, that reconciliation without reference to others is not always possible and HCI aim to create an environment where anyone is able to raise a complaint relating to HCI without fear of victimisation or reprisal. The aim of the policy is to ensure that anyone who has a concern within the scope of this policy knows who to contact, the process that will be followed and where appropriate, the action that will be taken to achieve a resolution.
- 2.3 HCI aims to -
 - Promote good relationships across the church family
 - Promote a good flow of information about church matters throughout the church family
 - Encourage a culture of openness and mutual respect that enables issues of concern to be discussed and resolved informally wherever possible
 - Ensure that complaints are resolved fairly, quickly and effectively – and as near as possible to the point of origin
- 2.4 HCI elders, trustees and management aim to promote a culture of openness regarding mistakes and errors and to demonstrate improvements, where learning has taken place in the context of this policy.

3. Process

- 3.1 All issues and concerns raised under this policy will be dealt with fairly and thoroughly in accordance with the principles set out in this document. In the paragraphs that follow, the reference to “you” is the person wishing to raise a complaint.
- 3.2 While it is hoped and expected that most problems are sorted out informally through frank and open discussion as described at step 1 below, you have the right to raise a complaint formally at any time, without going through an informal process first. (See below.)
- 3.3 At any time in this process you may be accompanied by or supported by another church member. Or trusted individual.
- 3.4 Persons raising a complaint may ask that all aspects of the matter are kept confidential. Where this has been agreed, relevant aspects of the matter only will be discussed with others on a “need to know” basis, such as for you to brief someone supporting you through the process. Note however that in some circumstances it may be necessary for the HCI elders / trustees to be informed, in order to fulfil their collective responsibility for effective oversight of the church.
- 3.5 If you are unclear with respect to any aspects of this policy and procedure, you may explain your concern to a ministry lead, senior manager, a trustee or an elder, who will support you and offer advice.

Step 1 – Informal discussions with the appropriate responsible person

- 3.6 Before raising a formal complaint, it is important that you are clear about the nature of your concern and also that you discuss this with the person you have the complaint against. If you are not comfortable approaching someone directly, you are encouraged to speak with someone to whom they are accountable. If the complaint also involves the person to whom they are accountable, you should escalate your concern to someone else in authority. (See below.) At this informal stage, the person you approach will facilitate an initial meeting between the affected parties. Approaching such discussions in a mature way will often lead to satisfactory resolution without the need for a more formal process.
- 3.7 Unless by mutual agreement of affected parties, no record will be kept of informal complaints. However, where this is agreed, such a record will be kept confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and associated guidance (GDPR) and with HCI policies.
- 3.8 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of informal discussions at step 1 you and want to continue to pursue the matter informally, you should talk to another senior manager or elder.
- 3.9 As stated earlier, you may also initiate the formal process at any time, if you believe for example, that the informal process is inappropriate, or not proving helpful.

Step 2 – Formal process

- 3.10 If you wish to raise a complaint formally either because you don't wish to go through an informal process first or because you are dissatisfied with the outcome of informal discussions at step 1, you should contact the individual responsible for the relevant activity or ministry or where that individual is affected, (or, if you have another legitimate reason to do so), a senior manager.
- 3.11 HCI employees may be contacted through the church office:
By email: office@hopechurchipswich.net

Or by phone – 01473 233176

Or through the senior leaders –

Tom Scrivens, elder who oversees employee team – tom.scrivens@hopechurchipswich.net

Tim Virgo, Elder responsible for a number of HCI ministries –

tim.virgo@hopechurchipswich.net

Matt Cornish, Head of Operations – matt.cornish@hopechurchipswich.net

- 3.12 If the complaint affects Tom Scrivens or a trustee or you have another legitimate reason to do so, you should raise it with an elder. It may be helpful to be aware of the areas of responsibility of each elder as follows –

Trustees / finance – Ian Little (also a Trustee).

Relationship with other churches – Maurice Nightingale.

Pastoral care – Tim Virgo.

Safeguarding and social justice – Mark Crawley.

Legal advice and litigation – Len South (also a Trustee).

No set responsibility - Tomi Oyebadejo and Nick Oldfield

The other HCI trustees are –

Dot Cordle

Brett Acfield

David Sansom

Clare Barlow

Contact details for the elders and trustees are available through the church office.

- 3.13 If your complaint affects one of the elders you should raise it with another elder. If your complaint is of a serious nature and you have a substantive reason to believe there is a risk of collusion between the elders, you have the option of raising it with Relational Mission as described at step 3. (See below.)
- 3.14 Having made contact with an appropriate person, you will be asked to set out your complaint at steps 2 in writing, (which may be by email).
- 3.15 Once the written complaint has been received the recipient will provide an initial response within 15 working days or earlier by agreement, for matters requiring more urgent attention. The initial response will set out the process and timescales for bringing the matter to a conclusion including details of a formal meeting, who will be present and how the meeting will be conducted. In some cases, an investigation may be undertaken prior to a formal meeting, in which case the response will set out the process, scope and timescales and the name of an appropriately independent person responsible for conducting the investigation (not necessarily the person to whom the concern has been raised).
- 3.16 After the formal meeting, a report will be produced to include recommendations regarding action to be taken – if any. The report will be shared with you with confidential information, for example, arising from any investigation, redacted. The report will recommend how the matter is resolved and brought to a satisfactory conclusion, including reference to associated HCI policies, where applicable.
- 3.17 The report and other relevant documentation will be kept confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and associated guidance (GDPR) and with HCI policies.

Appeals following step 2

- 3.18 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the report and recommendations at step 2, you may appeal to a more senior leader, or if step 2 was undertaken by Tom Scrivens, another elder.
- 3.19 If step 2 was facilitated by an elder, you may appeal to another elder or if your complaint was of a serious nature and you have a substantive reason to believe there is a risk of collusion between the elders, you have the option of appealing to Relational Mission or seeking advice from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), or an appropriate external person or body, (see step 3, below).
- 3.20 Appeals to a more senior leader to an elder must be made to the church office in writing (which may include email), within 7 working days of receipt of the step 2 report.
- 3.21 Such appeals following step 2 will be subject to an initial response within 15 working days or earlier by agreement for matters requiring more urgent attention. The process for appeals will be the same as that at step 2.
- 3.22 After the appeal meeting, a report will be produced to include action to be taken – if any. The report will be shared with you, with confidential information redacted. The report will set out how the matter is resolved and brought to a satisfactory conclusion, including reference to associated HCI policies, where applicable.
- 3.23 All relevant documentation will be kept confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and associated guidance (GDPR) and with HCI policies.
- 3.24 Other than complaints against an elder which are referred to step 3, decisions with respect to appeals at step 2, will be final.

Step 3 – Formal complaints against an elder (including where these have not been satisfactorily resolved at step 2).

- 3.25 If your complaint against an elder is serious in nature and / or you have grounds to believe that you may not have been given a fair hearing by the eldership (e.g. because you believe there is a risk of collusion) – you may go straight to step 3 by contacting Relational Mission (see below). Or, if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint against an elder at step 2 and wish to appeal you may also invoke step 3, by contacting Relational Mission.

4. Relational Mission

- 4.1 HCI is affiliated to the Relational Mission family of churches (relationalmission.org). Relational Mission and its leadership team give spiritual oversight and support to the eldership teams and churches that choose to affiliate with it, including through promoting transparency and good practice and conduct.
- 4.2 Contact with Relational Mission should be to their leadership team (see below). within 15 working days of receipt of the step 2 report if there is one – or if you are going straight to step 3 – within 28 days of your initial contact with someone in authority at HCI.
- 4.3 The Relational Mission Leadership Team will look at the claim made and aim to facilitate a successful resolution with HCI and yourself. However, Relational Mission has no legal authority over the churches that are affiliated with it. Therefore the final decision with respect to this process will lay with the Elders and Trustees of HCI.

You can contact Relational Mission via: admin@relationalmission.com
Or through Jubilee Family Centre - 0845 468 0270.

4.4 The process and timetable adopted by Relational Mission or external bodies will be in accordance with their own whistle-blowing policies and procedures.

4.5 If it is not possible to reach a resolution to your satisfaction through the step 3 process, you should seek advice from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), or go directly to an appropriate external person or body such as the police, social services or local authority.

5. Charity Commission reporting requirements.

5.1 Hope Church will comply and respond in a timely manner to all requests and requirements of the Charity Commission. This will include the Annual Report, declaration of all financial matters and all other information required. In line with the Charity Commission requirements any incidents that come within their regulations and guidance will also be promptly reported.

6. Organisation Chart

