



## **SOUND CHURCH**

### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Sound Church is committed to ensuring that there are several options for our congregation and visitors to communicate on any concerns they may have. We really value the feedback of our Church congregation.

This policy applies to anyone who comes into contact with our Charity, including those who have attended an event, interacted with us on social media or online, as well as professionals and anyone else who has had dealings with Sound Church.

#### **MAKING GENERAL COMMENTS**

If you would like to make a general comment about the church, then you would be welcome to email us at [hello@soundchurch.co.uk](mailto:hello@soundchurch.co.uk). Your comment will be passed to the Department Lead who will reply as soon as they are able.

We also welcome anonymous comments from those who attend.



## **OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:**

### **Part 1: The Principles**

#### **Initial concerns**

Problems or doubts that arise do not usually start as complaints: they are, at first, concerns or dissatisfactions.

Concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. We will take informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage and this will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

This complaints procedure does not in any way undermine our efforts to resolve concerns informally. In most cases Charity staff will be the first point of contact for concerns. We hope that staff are able to resolve such issues on the spot, including apologising or clarifying where necessary.

### **Part 2: The Formal Complaints Procedure**

#### **The stages of complaints**

This complaints procedure has two well-defined stages.

- **Stage one:** complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint) or Senior Leadership Team
- **Stage two:** complaint heard by Chair of Trustees

Please note: If your complaint is a safeguarding allegation about a member of the staff or volunteer team then we will follow our alternative process for managing such allegations, which can be found in our safeguarding policy and whistleblowing policy.

#### **Stage One: Complaint heard by a staff member or Senior Leadership Team**

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Usually that can be managed through a discussion with the relevant member of staff.

Formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. Formal complaints will be sent to the Senior Leadership Team or Chair of Trustees who will determine who is best placed to investigate the complaint. In such cases, the Senior Leadership Team and Chair of Trustees should be informed of the complaint and appropriate records kept.



In some cases, the complainant may indicate that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the Senior Leadership Team will deal directly with the matter or can refer the complainant to another staff member. Where the complaint concerns the Senior Leadership Team the complaint will be referred to the Chair of Trustees. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the Senior Leadership Team may consider referring the complainant to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

## Investigating complaints

At each stage the investigating officer should make sure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

## Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure the Charity wants to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review policies in light of the complaint.

Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. *An admission that the Charity could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.* We want to identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.



## **Stage Two: Complaint heard by the Chair of Trustees**

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one or is unhappy with the outcome, they may wish to pursue the complaint to the second stage where it will be heard by the Chair of Trustees. The Chair of Trustees may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but will make the decision on the action to be taken.

If you remain dissatisfied, you have 14 days to inform the Chair of Trustees in writing, who will pass your correspondence on to our Independent Person who will carry out an independent review of the complaint file. The Independent Person will then compile a report within 28 days, which will contain clear conclusions and any recommendations. This report will be sent to the complainant and to Sound Church.

For children and young people who are dissatisfied, they can contact the Children's Commissioner for England, who promotes and protects children's rights.

If you are accessing our Charity, then records of the complaint will be held on file for a minimum of 3 years following closure of your file with us. However, if you are not accessing our Charity, then record of the complaint will be held on file for a minimum of three years.

## **Managing and Recording Complaints**

### **Recording complaints**

Sound Church will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, the member of staff will ensure that the complainant and the Charity have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls can be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record. The Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for the records and hold them centrally. (In accordance with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, complaints relating to protected characteristics incidents will be logged.)

### **Monitoring complaints**

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on an annual basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

### **Publicising the procedure**

Details of the complaints and compliments procedure will be included in the information given to parents, carers and children and young people during the induction meeting.

Latest Review: May 2023