



**ST JOHN'S
CHURCH
HOVE**

Complaints Policy and Procedure

We recognise that our church members and all those who visit our church or any of our church activities have the right to expect high quality services. However, we also appreciate that from time to time there may be occasions when users of our services feel that the quality or level of service provided falls short of what they could reasonably expect.

Your continued goodwill is greatly valued by us and we would expect to resolve any day to day difficulties or complaints informally and as quickly as possible. In the first instance we would ask you to raise any complaint directly with the church member concerned.

If their response does not meet expected standards, then you have the right to complain.

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.

We will consider any complaint using the procedures set out below.

The complaint could be about:

- conduct of our clergy and/or some or all members of our church,
- the standard or sort of service we provide,
- discrimination,
- provision of inaccurate information, or
- poor administration including delays in responding to enquiries.

What is the purpose of the policy?

- To protect the interests of all church users and visitors
- To improve the quality of services we provide by responding to the views and needs of people affected
- To enable church users and visitors to propose improvements to our ways of working
- To protect our minister and church members
- To provide a means of monitoring our performance.

The clergy and all PCC members should be familiar with the process.

Complaints against clergy should be passed to the archdeacon or the area bishop.

If 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 Diocesan and Charity Commission procedures for handling allegations of abuse.

All complaints should be recorded by the PCC Secretary in the appropriate file, and kept with the PCC Minutes. Details should include the nature of the complaint and the date received, the process followed and the action taken and the outcomes including further follow-up.

The Chair will keep the PCC informed of the number and nature of complaints, and the outcomes. S/he will report to the PCC on this at least annually.

How is a complaint dealt with?

Step 1 - Informal Procedure

The aim always, when responding to complaints and grievances, is to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily and fairly by mutual discussion.

- The person making the complaint should in the first instance speak to the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, which will hopefully be resolved in this way.
- A note should be agreed at the end of the discussion, summarising the complaint, the date and who was involved and the agreed outcome, and passed to a Churchwarden to ensure lessons are learned by the Church
- If the complainant is still not satisfied, they should move to Step 2: the Formal Procedure.

Step 2 - Formal Procedure

- The complaint should be made in writing (or by email), marked 'confidential', to the Incumbent (Vicar), who will acknowledge, in writing (or by email), within ten working days, the receipt of the complaint. If the complaint is about the Incumbent, the complaint should be addressed to the Churchwardens.
- The receiver of the complaint will investigate the circumstances leading to the complaint and will communicate the results of the investigation to the complainant within a reasonable time – normally within 20 working days of the complaint being received. If the investigation includes a meeting with the complainant, s/he may be accompanied or supported by a friend, but not a legal representative.
- If the complaint is found to be justified, the investigator will agree any necessary further action with the complainant.
- A note should be agreed at that point, summarising the complaint, the date and who was involved and the agreed outcome, and passed to a Churchwarden to ensure lessons are learned by the Church
- If the complainant is still not satisfied, they should move to Step 3: Appeal.

Step 3 - Appeal.

- The complainant will have the right – if dissatisfied with the results of Step 2 – to put their case, in writing (or by email), to an appeal panel of three PCC members, which will include at least one Churchwarden and should be addressed via a Churchwarden.
- If the appeal is found to be justified, the appeal panel will agree any necessary further action with the complainant.
- The response will be confirmed in writing (or by email) within ten days of the meeting held to hear it.
- A note should be agreed at that point, summarising the complaint, the date and who was involved and the agreed outcome, and passed to a Churchwarden to ensure lessons are learned by the Church.
- The decision of the appeal panel is final and no further appeal is possible.

Initial Contact

If you have a complaint, contact:

The Chair of PCC

St John the Baptist Church

Palmeira Square

Hove BN3 2BW

Email: douglas.holt49@gmail.com

Please do also let us know if you are happy with St John's services.

When your complaint cannot be resolved

Where we have exhausted all avenues and the complainant is still dissatisfied, they may contact the Charity Commission as follows:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

Signed.....

Rev'd Canon Douglas Holt

March 2016