

Complaints Handling process map - for Hope Church Network members and attenders

A complaint is defined as a serious objection or offense relating to a decision or action taken by Hope Church Network staff, trustees, elders, deacons or people appointed on a voluntary basis to serve on ministry teams.

Step	Action
1	Any complaint should first be raised informally with the person / group concerned and hope to resolve amicably, extending forgiveness and acceptance to parties concerned.
2	Where complaints cannot be informally resolved- the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the trustees.
3	The trustees to appoint a Complaints Panel of 3 people to hear the complaint. The panel should comprise of: 1 x Non paid elder of either local church (minimum) 2 x trustee The 3 appointees must not be linked to the complaint.
4	The complaints panel should approach the parties involved and invite them to a meeting to discuss together the nature of the complaint. The meeting invitation should include: • Time/place of meeting • Offer for the parties to bring representation • Submission of any supporting documents e.g. evidence (if relevant) or names of any witnesses (if relevant)
5	Complaints panel hearing: In attendance will be the panel, the complainant and the respondent, and schedule any witnesses to join if relevant.
6	After the meeting, the complaints panel should consider the information and make a decision as to whether the complaint is justified.
7	Where necessary, the complaints panel may produce recommendations of any changes or recourse resulting from the complaint.
8	The complaints panel should report their decision and recommendations to the trustees and record on the complaints register.
9	The complaints panel should write to the complainant and respondent with their decision within a week of the hearing and advise the complainant they may appeal the decision if they are unhappy.
10	The complainant may appeal if unhappy with the decision

11	The complainant must put their request for an appeal hearing to trustees in writing within a week of the notification of the decision
12	The trustees will form an appeal panel (of 3 trustees independent of complaints panel membership and not linked to the complaint) to hear the complaint.
13	Trustees to schedule an appeal within 2 weeks of the request
14	The appeal panel should review all the supporting documentation and notes provided for the complaints panel.
15	The appeal panel should approach the parties involved and invite them to attend the appeal. The meeting invitation should include: • Time/place of meeting • Offer for the parties to bring representation • The supporting documents provided at the complaints hearing
16	After the meeting, the appeal panel should consider the information and make a decision as to whether to uphold or quash the original decision made by the complaints panel.
17	Where appropriate, the appeal panel may produce recommendations of any changes or recourse resulting from the complaint.
18	The appeal panel should report their decision and recommendations to the trustees and update on the complaints register.
19	The panel will write to the parties notifying them of the outcome of the appeal.
20	The appeal panel's decision will be final.
21	The complainant may escalate the complaint to the Charity Commission should the nature of the matter concern a serious incident which has not been satisfactorily responded to.