

Complaints Procedure



A N C H O R
C H U R C H
LYMINGTON & PENNINGTON

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Introduction

Anchor Church strives to do the best it can, both in every church service and in our wider service to the community.

We acknowledge that we may not always get it right and, when this happens, we would like to know what has gone wrong so that we can sort out the situation as quickly as possible and try to ensure that it does not happen again. It is also helpful for us to receive feedback when things go right.

This policy applies to volunteers, members of the congregation and members of the wider community who we may come into contact with through our activities.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints or suggestions should initially be made in writing or by email, usually to the Pastor, or to another of the Trustees.

In making a complaint, people should tell us:

- what has happened
- when it happened
- the background to the problem, if it is relevant
- details of any witnesses to the events or issues of concern
- details of anyone else you have reported the matter to
- what's been done to try and sort it out (if appropriate)
- what Anchor Church can do to put things right (if appropriate)
- confirmation that you are happy for the detail of your complaint and the supporting documentation to be provided to the person complained about, should it be necessary to do so

Your complaint cannot always be dealt with unless you provide all the information described above. It is helpful to be clear that you are making a complaint, rather than just making a comment, and that you are looking for this process to be followed.

Where complaints or suggestions are made verbally, workers and volunteers are encouraged to offer support in writing the complaint down and in following this process.

If the response from Anchor Church is not satisfactory, you can send your complaint to the Trustees.

What you can expect from us

Anchor Church will acknowledge the complaint within a week of receiving it and investigate it as quickly as possible. Anchor Church may contact you for further information.

The Pastor may delegate responsibility for investigating the complaint to the person responsible for providing the activity you are complaining about. You will be told who has been appointed to investigate.

The complaint will be reviewed by the investigator, who will seek to:

- Establish what has happened, when it happened and who else was involved;
- Contact or meet the complainant if there is a need for clarification regarding the complaint or further information is required;

- If, following the initial information and any discussion with the complainant, the investigation is to proceed, the investigator will inform any who have been complained about (i.e. employees or volunteers running activities) of the nature of the complaint made – unless, in the view of the investigator this would prejudice the investigation interview;
- Interview those involved and complained about where necessary to understand their account of events;
- Keep notes of all interviews.

The person responsible for investigating your complaint will write to you within four weeks telling you the result of their investigation. You will not be made aware of specific action taken against Anchor Church employees due to issues of confidentiality. We will, however, tell you if your complaint has been upheld or not.

Child or Adult Protection Issues

Where a complaint relates to a child or adult protection issue, the investigation and follow-up actions will be carried out in accordance with Anchor Church's safeguarding procedures. This might include the involvement of the Local Authority designated officer or the Police.

Contact by the complainant

Once a formal complaint has been made, the complainant should avoid ongoing discussion or correspondence with any person complained about (relating to the complaint) without the consent of the investigator.

Confidentiality

The content of your complaint and the fact that it has been raised will be kept confidential, except to the extent that is necessary to properly investigate the complaint and reach a decision. This will not be the case if we become aware that you have not treated the fact and content of your complaint as confidential, or if we are required to contact the Police or Local Authority.

Anchor Church expects complainants to keep reasonable confidentiality as to the nature and content of the complaint so that the investigator can work without obstruction.

Privacy

Documents amassed during the course of the processes described above will be retained or destroyed according to the Anchor Church Data Protection Policy and Procedures and/or any stipulation required by law.

Vexatious Complaints/complaints in bad faith

If the investigator concludes that a vexatious complaint or a complaint in bad faith has been made, Anchor Church reserves the right to take the following actions:

- In all cases to inform the complainant that this is how the complaint is viewed, giving the reasons why and the consequences of this.

- In the case of Anchor Church volunteers who have made vexatious complaints – to write to the charity trustees, indicating that they have made a vexatious complaint or a complaint in bad faith which might be a matter for charity discipline to be exercised (e.g. they are not allowed to volunteer any longer).
- In the case of other persons making a vexatious complaint or a complaint in bad faith – further complaints and correspondence on the same issue will always be read, but not necessarily responded to.