

Complaints Handling Policy Statement

Updated October 2019

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 There may be occasions where the actions of North Plymouth Community Church unintentionally do not meet the expectations of the public, members or service users. This procedure is therefore designed to ensure appropriate consideration is given to each complaint in a way that is as fair and impartial as possible.

1.2 North Plymouth Community Church aims to handle all complaints fairly and honestly regardless of who makes a complaint. North Plymouth Community Church treats all members of the community equitably and will not show bias to any particular individual or group.

1.3 North Plymouth Community Church will endeavour to follow best practice for confidentiality and data protection throughout the complaints procedure, and this would also be expected of any complainant.

2. Complaints Procedure

2.1 North Plymouth Community Church's desired method of dealing with conflict or disagreements is an informal process and is based on Matthew 18: 15 *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established' 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church."* Many complaints can be resolved informally by discussing the issue with a member of the North Plymouth Community Church Leadership Team or Trustees who are ultimately responsible for all North Plymouth Community Church staff, volunteers and projects.

2.2 If, after discussing any concerns with someone from the North Plymouth Community Church Leadership Team or Trustees, the complainant remains dissatisfied he/she can make a formal complaint. Matthew 18:17 states that anything not resolved informally should be taken to the church. In this context we deem 'the church' to mean the church Leadership Team. Formal complaints must therefore be made in writing by letter or e-mail to the North Plymouth Community Church Leadership Team. If the complaint is against any member of the Leadership Team however, then the complaint should be addressed and sent to the Chair of Trustees.

2.3 In order to avoid ambiguity, the complainant should make it clear at this stage that they wish it to be taken as a formal complaint by stating so clearly in the first line of the letter or e-mail.

2.4 If complaints or comments are received that do not meet the criteria outlined above, or are not intended to be formal complaints, North Plymouth Community Church retains the right to deal with those comments via its formal process if deemed appropriate.

2.5 If the Leadership Team or Chair of Trustees is unclear on any point in the complaint they will contact the complainant to seek clarification, in order to give full consideration to all the points they wish to make.

3. Timeframes & Process

The process undertaken by the North Plymouth Community Church 'investigator' should be as follows:

3.1 The investigator will conduct a face to face interview with the complainant, to be followed up by any written evidence where appropriate.

3.2 The investigator will then gather relevant information and evidence from other sources, including face to face interviews with the person or the leader of the project that the complaint is specifically regarding, and any potential witnesses.

3.3 There will then be further opportunity for the investigator to go back to the complainant for more information or clarification where appropriate.

3.4 During all meetings, both parties are to have an appropriate representative of their choice present to ensure accountability. The investigator may have a senior member of the staff team, a member of the Leadership Team or a Trustee to accompany them and the complainant may have a friend or a family member to accompany them. Minutes of each meeting must be agreed afterwards by both parties.

3.5 The complainant will be sent a full response.

4. Appeals

If the complainant is unhappy with the initial decision, the complainant may lodge an appeal against the decision or outcome. In this instance, two or three Trustees will form a 'working group' and will undertake their own independent process and will send a full response to the complainant, the investigator and the Leadership Team.