



CONFERENCE *of* RELIGIOUS

England & Wales

COMPLAINTS POLICY OF
THE CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS ENGLAND
AND WALES

Complaints Policy of Conference of Religious England & Wales

The Conference of Religious (COR) views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at The Conference of Religious knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of The Conference of Religious, which the COR has jurisdiction over.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from members of the Executive Committee of COR; leaders recognised by the organisation; volunteers and those who work with COR.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use The Conference of Religious Discipline and Grievance policy.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to the General Secretary, Conference of Religious England and Wales at St Philomena's, 70-71 Euston Square, London, NW1 1DJ or by e-mail to gensec@corew.org

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded. The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to The Conference of Religious (for example: member, COR identifying number)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next
- Ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words, unless to do so would be inappropriate.

Resolving Complaints

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to The Finance Committee nominated by the Executive Trustees within two weeks.

On receiving the complaint, it should be recorded in a complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, an appropriate person in the Secretariat should investigate it and take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within two weeks. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a reply will be given.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Executive level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the President of the Executive of the Conference of Religious or if impeded the Vice-Chair.

The request for Executive committee level review should be acknowledged within two weeks of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The President may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate an alternative person to do so. This may involve reviewing any paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a reply will be given.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Executive decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about a named person should not have person involved.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints (For internal use)

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation
e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal