

Complaints Handling Policy

Introduction

The Sudan Church Association/ Church Association for Sudan and South Sudan ["the Association"] is committed to providing an excellent service to its members and other stakeholders working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. We have developed a Complaints Policy and Procedure that explains our approach to receiving complaints.

Our Aim

The Association aims to resolve complaints quickly, fairly and effectively. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve the services that we provide is by listening and responding to the views of our members, partners and stakeholders and in particular responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

We aim to ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we deal with it promptly, politely and when appropriate confidentially;
- we will respond in the correct way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology or information on any action taken;
- we will learn from complaints and use them to improve the services that we offer;
- we review our complaints policy and procedures every three years.

The Association recognises that many concerns raised will be informal, and we aim to deal with these quickly. In the first instance, we would expect any complaint to be raised directly with the trustee, volunteer or staff member concerned. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Definition

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with our services; whether justified or not; with the Association, with a Trustee, or member of staff, that relates to the Association and that requires a formal response

Purpose

The Association 's complaint procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

The Association's responsibility will be to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take appropriate action if required;

The complainant's responsibility is to:

- raise their concerns promptly and directly with the person concerned and if their concerns cannot be resolved satisfactorily informally, then to follow the formal complaints procedure as detailed;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow the Association a reasonable amount of time to deal with the matter as detailed in the formal complaints procedure;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the Association's control.

Monitoring and Reporting

Trustees of the Association will receive regularly an anonymized report of complaints made and their resolution.

Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and the Association maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality. Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Principles of the Complaints Policy

- The Association's Complaints policy is based on the principle of a three- stage process (as detailed in the Complaints Procedure below).
- The Complaints Policy will apply to all the services that the Association provides.
- If at any time during the investigation of a complaint matters arise that warrant investigation under disciplinary proceedings, or through a criminal investigation, the complaints procedure will be suspended until those investigations are concluded. Similarly, the complaints procedure should be suspended if a complainant is actively seeking legal redress.
- Where a complaint is against a trustee, volunteer or member of staff they should be informed of the support services available to them.
- The Trustees should be informed of the receipt of a Stage 1 formal complaint. A complete record of the entire process should be kept. A copy of all reports, transcripts of interviews and other relevant information should be forwarded to the Trustees for immediate review.
- The Association may, at any stage of the formal complaints procedure, review a complaint and give a decision, without a formal investigation, where a member of the Trustees deem the complaint to be deliberately repetitive or vexatious. Examples of such complaints being unsubstantiated or repetitive complaints against an individual

or service, or where a complaint has previously been investigated and appropriate action taken.

- When appealing against a previous decision, the complainant will be asked to state why they are dissatisfied with how their complaint was handled.

Commitments by the Association

Every complaint will be:-

- • dealt with as quickly as possible
- • handled fairly and politely; and
- • investigated fully

We wish to be as flexible as possible in receiving complaints. Complaints can be received:

- • by letter
- • by phone
- • in person
- • by email

Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure has three stages:

STAGE 1: First Informal Complaint

A complainant should, in the first instance, make their concerns known to a Trustee. That trustee will notify the Chair of Trustees and together they will try to resolve the matter immediately and informally. If this is not possible, the complainant will be asked if they wish to make a formal complaint.

STAGE 2: Formal Complaint

If the complainant wishes to proceed, they will need to put their complaint in writing addressed to the Chair of Trustees. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing or by phone within 7 working days and we will aim to resolve the complaint within 10 working days. If this target of 10 days cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the delay, the reason for the delay, and the new target for responding. If the complaint involves the Chair of Trustees, the complaint may be addressed to the Hon. Secretary

STAGE 3: Complaint Has Been Investigated, But Complainant Is Still Not Satisfied

At this stage the complaint will be dealt with by the Board of Trustees acting together. They will appoint an independent person to carry out an investigation on their behalf and provide a response within 28 working days. Their findings will be presented to trustee committee and their response will be final.

Agreed by The Board of Trustees at its meeting on ...19th April 2018