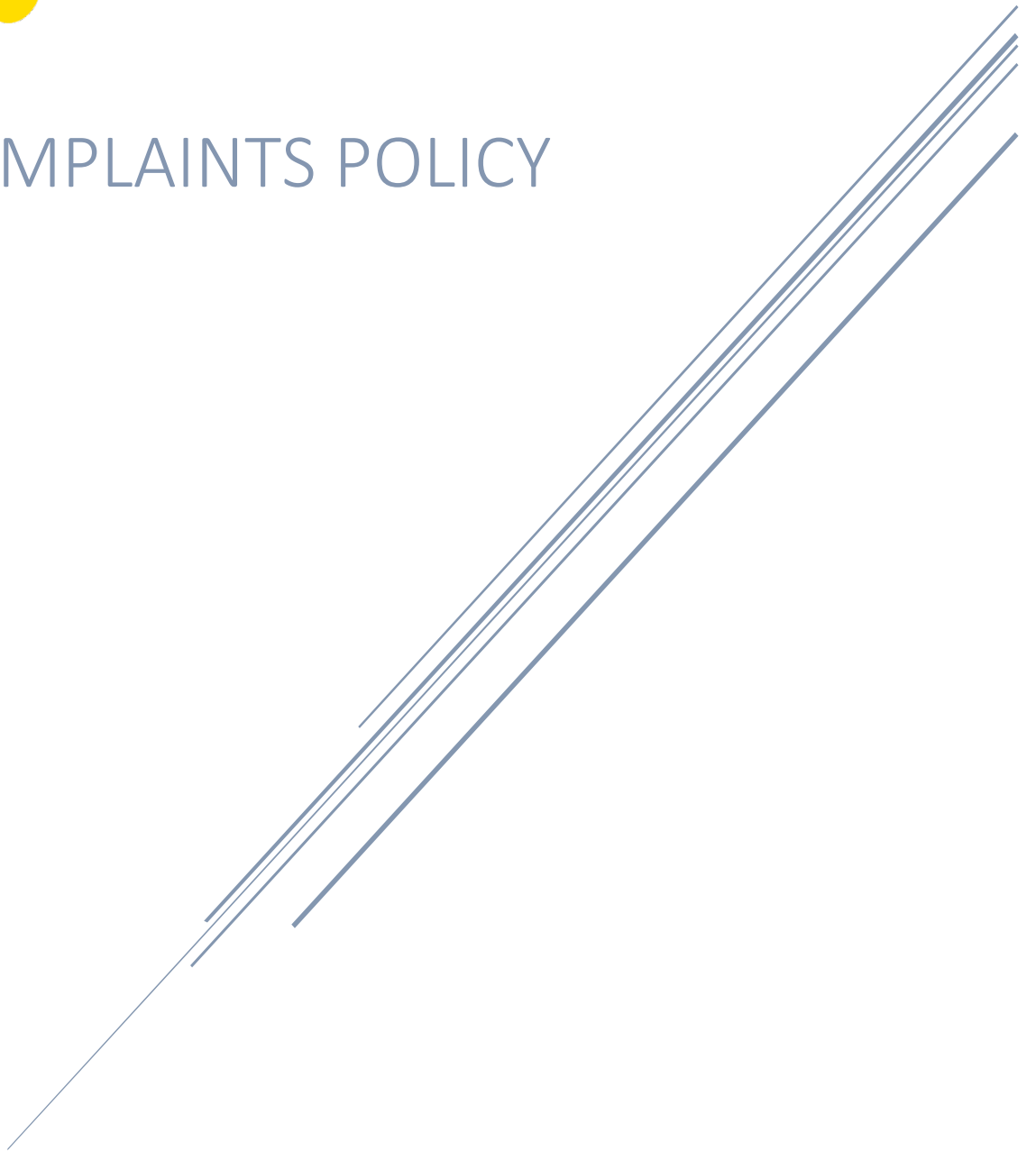




## COMPLAINTS POLICY



# **CONTENTS:**

1. PURPOSE

2. SCOPE

3. DEFINITION/S

4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 CONFIDENTIALITY

5. PROCEDURES

5.1 PUBLICISED CONTACT DETAILS FOR COMPLAINTS

5.2 RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

5.3 VARIATION OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

6. TRAINING

7. MONITORING

8. GUIDANCE

8.1 PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR HANDLING VERBAL COMPLAINTS

*This policy does not cover complaints from staff who should use The Lighthouse Charity Discipline and Grievance policies in the staff handbook.*

## **1. PURPOSE**

**The Lighthouse Charity (LHC)** is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for its staff, trustees, volunteers, and all other building users. LHC recognises that staff, trustees or volunteers may receive a complaint at any time.

## **2. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all The Lighthouse Charity staff, trustees and volunteers.

LHC understands "An effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships with the people on whom the charity depends."

By Handling complaints well we:

- Demonstrate our commitment to our congregation, its volunteers and the outside world.
- Demonstrate our commitment to serving one another as best we know how.
- Find out about things that have gone wrong and try to fix them
- Try to prevent things causing the complaint from happening again in future

The Lighthouse Charity views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future and a chance to put things right for the person(s) that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To provide a fair complaints procedure that is easy for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To try, wherever possible, to resolve complaints and ensure relationships are repaired.
- To ensure everyone at The Lighthouse Charity knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To publicise the existence of our complaints process so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.

## **3. DEFINITION/S**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of The Lighthouse Charity. Complaints can come from any person or organisation with a legitimate interest in The Lighthouse Charity or local community members. They can be received verbally, by phone, e-mail or in writing.

## **4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Trustees.

### **4.1 CONFIDENTIALITY**

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

## **5. PROCEDURES**

### **5.1 PUBLISHED CONTACT DETAILS FOR COMPLAINTS:**

Written complaints may be sent to Rob Tervet at The Lighthouse, 131 Hargham Road, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 2JP or by e-mail at [rob@christcommunitychurch.co.uk](mailto:rob@christcommunitychurch.co.uk)

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 01953 452865 or in-person to any The Lighthouse Charity Staff member, volunteers or Trustees at The Lighthouse, 131 Hargham Road, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 2JP.

### **5.2 RESOLVING COMPLAINTS**

In many cases, the 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 a Trustee who is not the Chairman within one week.

#### **Stage One**

Upon receiving the complaint, it should be recorded in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, the trustees will delegate an appropriate person to 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 one week. 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, a progress report should be sent indicating when a complete response will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken due to the complaint.

#### **Stage Two**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the Chair of the trustees review the complaint.

The request for this stage review should be acknowledged within one week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chairperson may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the 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 dealing with the original complaint at Stage One should be informed of what is happening. Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible, a progress report should be sent indicating when a complete response will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken due to the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final unless the majority of the Trustees decide 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](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

## **5.3 VARIATION OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The Trustees may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest; for example, a complaint about a Trustee should not also have the Trustee as the person leading a Stage Two review.

## **6. TRAINING**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify trends indicating a need for further action.

## **7. MONITORING**

This policy will be reviewed regularly. Monitoring will be undertaken through a quarterly review of the incidence book and ongoing regular discussions between staff/volunteer (s) and line managers.

## **8. GUIDANCE**

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

- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number, Date and time
- Write down the facts of the complaint: when it happened, where, who witnessed it, etc. (Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by e-mail so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant that the complaint will be logged and that the process will follow the complaints procedure as detailed in the complaints policy/