



# THE GATEWAY CHURCH



The Gateway Church Kings Lynn

## Complaints and Grievances Procedure

### 1 What counts as a complaint and a grievance?

**A complaint** is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about an action, or lack of action by a person acting on behalf of the church, or about the policies and procedures of the church.

When the complaint is made by someone who is paid by the Church or part of the volunteer team, whether paid (Pastor, Youth Pastor and administrator) Volunteer, (for instance, children's workers, or refreshments), it is usually referred to as **a grievance**.

A complaint or a grievance may include **an allegation** that a person has behaved in an unacceptable way.

☑ Complaints and grievances against the Pastor are handled through the Eldership team and if necessary the trustees.

☑ Complaints and grievances others are handled by the Pastor in discussion with the Eldership team where appropriate.

☑ At all stages the investigation must be kept strictly confidential and the content and process must not be discussed outside the discussions.

### 2 Problem-solving

The aim always, when responding to complaints and grievances, is to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation. Problems should therefore be brought direct to the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, and will hopefully be resolved in this way.

**If, however, a complaint or grievance relates to or includes an allegation that a child or adult who may be vulnerable has been harmed or is at risk of harm, or that an adult or another**

**child may have caused harm to a child or adult who may be vulnerable, it must also include the Child protection officer and the child protection policy will take precedence.**

If the complaint or grievance does not concern a child or adult who may be vulnerable, and the person bringing it is not satisfied with the outcome at the problem-solving stage, that person may then invoke this formal procedure.

A complaint or grievance does not automatically result in disciplinary action; however, as a result of an investigation into a complaint or a grievance, it may be necessary to address the matter through the disciplinary procedure.

### **3 Formal procedures for complaints and grievances**

#### **Stage One**

☐ On receipt of a complaint the Pastor or member of the Eldership team will arrange to meet with the complainant to listen to and note the facts of the complaint or grievance. A record of this meeting will be kept recording all the relevant facts and evidence; a copy of this will be given to the complainant, who must agree that the record is an accurate statement of the complaint.

☐ The Pastor or member of the Eldership team will then interview the subject of the complaint or grievance, who may also be accompanied by a friend or other supporter if they wish, to listen to their response to the complaint or grievance brought against them. A record of this meeting will be kept and given to the subject of the complaint or grievance who must agree by signing the record of the meeting that it is accurate.

☐ The Pastor or member of the Eldership team may then interview any other relevant parties and record the outcome of the interviews.

☐ The Pastor/Eldership team then draws conclusions and informs the complainant and the subject of the complaint or grievance of the outcome of the investigation orally and in writing. This should be done ideally within a week of the complaint or grievance being made, but will be subject to the availability of all parties concerned

#### **Stage Two**

☐ If the conclusions reached at Stage One do not satisfactorily resolve the complaint or grievance, the complaint or grievance should be put in writing to the Pastor or the Eldership team, who will convene and chair a panel of two Eldership team members who have not been involved in the process before.

☐ The panel will repeat the Stage One process, meeting separately with the complainant, the subject of the complaint or grievance and additionally with the Pastor/Eldership team member who conducted the initial investigation.

☐ The panel may also separately call other witnesses as necessary.

☐ The panel members will then sit alone to form a judgement and make a decision about the complaint or grievance. The Chair of the panel will inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint or grievance of the outcome of the investigation orally and in writing. This should be done ideally within a month of the original complaint being made, but will be subject to the availability of all parties concerned

