



## **E32 Complaints Policy Version 210324**

### **E32 CITY LIFE CHURCH Complaints Policy**

*The vision of **CityLife Church** is simply to love God, love one another and love the world. We seek to provide a place of belonging and growth for our members, employees, volunteers and for those accessing our services. **CityLife Church** is committed to develop and maintain a culture of safeguarding and to promote the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk.*

*Our projects and partnerships have at their heart, God's love for all people, especially the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.*

**1 Samuel 16:7 "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the lord looks at the heart"**

#### **Foreword**

This policy sets out the procedures we will follow when we receive a complaint from users of our services, an organisation or member of the public. It does not address complaints made by employees which is dealt with through the Staff Grievance Policy (E30) nor job applicants which are dealt with through the Recruitment Policy (E42).

This procedure provides a means of resolving a complaint about City Life Church. Examples of complaints include: dissatisfaction with our service, e.g. how a matter has been dealt with or the speed it has been dealt with or the failure to deal with the matter; it can also be used should a dispute arise between a service user and City Life Church regarding policy, procedures or activities.

#### **Policy Statement:**

We aim to provide a service of a standard acceptable to all our users. If we fail to do that we want to know about it. This will enable us not only to deal with the specific problem, but also to learn from it and to take steps to avoid it happening again.

This policy sets out how a complaint can be made and what we will do if a complainant thinks the service she/he has received is unsatisfactory.

This policy is available on request from any employee and will be displayed in the service user area at CLEAR offices and in the City Life Church and Amber offices and can be made available in the language of the complainant.

#### **Scope:**

This policy relates to anyone receiving a service or level of support from City Life Church.

#### **Legal framework**

Charities Act 2011

#### **Supporting Documents**

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies, procedures, guidance and other related documents, including:



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### **Policies:**

- E06 Interface with clients and volunteers
- E30 Grievance Policy
- E42 Recruitment Policy

### **Aims /Guidance:**

#### **The Procedure**

When someone wishes to register a complaint, the following procedure should be adopted. The Senior Manager of the area concerned (e.g. CLEAR Project Manager/employed Trustee/Amber Project Manager) will be responsible for ensuring the action required by this procedure is taken within the designated timescales. Where the complaint is against the Senior Manager, the same procedure will be followed, but with a Director/Trustee substituting for the Senior Manager's role at all stages.

#### **City Life Church assures the complainant that:**

- their complaint will be taken seriously
- it will be dealt with confidentially in that people will be involved only if necessary
- it will be dealt with fairly and within agreed time limits
- an independent interpreter will be made available if necessary.

Every complainant is entitled to be accompanied by a supporter of their choice.

#### **Preliminary Stage**

The complaint can be received either in writing (a complaints form is available) or by a request to make a verbal complaint.

#### **Stage 1: Local Resolution**

The complainant should be invited to discuss the complaint with the Senior Manager. This can be done in person or by phone, whichever is appropriate. The Senior Manager should keep a record of the conversation on the Complaints Monitoring Sheet (E32b). The Senior Manager will endeavour to resolve the matter.

Only the people directly involved in the case will be told about it. If there is some reason why the complainant is worried about confidentiality, they should say this when they tell the Senior Manager about their complaint. He or she will then contact the complainant in strict confidence to talk about this before any investigation is started.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, or where it is not possible to use Stage 1 above (for example if it is not possible for them to phone or visit the office) then refer to Stage 2 below.

**Stage 1 should be completed within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.**

#### **Stage 2**

The complainant should be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Senior Manager, marked Private and Confidential, providing as much detail of the complaint as possible.



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The complainant can write their complaint in the language they prefer. We will organise translation if required and the complainant will be sent a copy. If an interpreter is needed for any meeting arranged with the complainant, we will pay standard rates for an interpreter.

If the complainant is not able to put their complaint in writing, the complainant will be offered an interview with the Senior Manager or his / her nominee. The role of the Manager or nominee at this meeting will be confined to putting the complaints in writing, obtaining the complainant's approval for the contents of this and asking the complainant to sign to indicate they agree with the contents. The complainant may choose to work with a third party at this stage and throughout the process. We will provide a list of potential advocates if the complainant does not have a resource they can turn to, such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau and other similar organisations.

The Senior Manager will then investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it.

The Senior Manager may delegate any aspect of the investigation to a nominee.

If the complaint involves an employee, there will be a panel hearing with the Senior Manager and a Director/Trustee. The Senior Manager should offer the opportunity for the employee to put forward their account, either by written statement or by presentation to the Panel.

The Senior Manager will ensure that all complaints receive a response in writing within 10 working days of the letter / complaint notes being received. This letter will summarise what investigations have been carried out and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter. If we are found to be at fault, a full apology will be given and the complainant will be informed of the steps that will be taken by us to put things right. If there are learning points for us, then these should be included in this response. A copy of this letter should be attached to the Complaints Form.

If a response by letter is unsuitable, the complainant will be offered an interview with the Manager to provide the response verbally. This meeting should be held within 10 working days as before. A written record of this interview will be kept and signed by the complainant.

If the complainant is not satisfied at this stage they should ask for the matter to be dealt with under Stage 3.

### **Stage 3: Appeal Panel Review**

Should the person be dissatisfied with the response given, they may make an appeal in writing. They will have 10 working days to appeal. This appeal should be made to the Directors/Trustees who will convene a Complaints Panel. A record of the complaint and response given will be supplied to the Panel and additional information offered by either party may be considered. In all cases the decision or response to be taken will be based on all the evidence gathered. In certain circumstances it may become appropriate for the panel to commission an independent investigation. Under these circumstances the timescales for investigation and review will be defined by the Panel.



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The conclusion of this appeal will be given in writing to the complainant within 15 working days, subject to the above. The decision at this point will be final.

The Complaints Panel will comprise of two Directors/Trustees and the Senior Manager. Wherever possible the Directors/Trustees will be people with no prior involvement in the complaint in question.

The complainant will be informed by letter that the appeal has been received and that the case is being dealt with, outlining the timescales for the appeal hearing and response.

Records of the meeting will be kept and the Complaints Monitoring Form will be completed. The Panel’s findings will be reported to the next meeting of the Directors/Trustees.

**Recording and Monitoring Complaints**

All complaints will be recorded and kept on file, including those which were resolved without being put in writing. The Complaints Monitoring Form shall be used to do this. All complaints shall be treated with regard to the Confidentiality Policy (E16).

The Senior Manager will make a report annually at the Management Meeting, summarising any complaints received, how they were resolved and what action has been taken for the future.

**Publicising the Policy**

The Senior Manager of each project is responsible for ensuring that the Complaints Policy is publicised.

**Ensuring the Effectiveness of the Policy**

All employees and volunteers will be advised of the complaints policy at induction and staff training. The policy will be reviewed periodically and any changes publicised to employees.

**Monitoring & Review:**

This policy will be reviewed by the board of trustees. The Operations Manager will ensure this policy is implemented and followed by City Life Church and will pass any concerns or feedback to the board of trustees.

City Life Church

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**Version Tracker**

Date issued: 24/03/2021

Review Date: 03/2024

Version	Updated	Approved	Main Changes



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Actions:

This policy must be shared with all City Life Employees, Trustees, Volunteers