



# Parish of St Francis of Assisi, West Wickham

## Complaints and Grievances Procedure

### 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 deployed within the parish, whether paid (for instance, paid youth workers and administrators) or holding unremunerated office (for instance, Sunday School leaders or servers), it is usually referred to as a grievance.

A complaint or grievance may include an allegation that a person has behaved in an unacceptable way. Complaints and grievances against licensed or commissioned ministers (Readers, Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries, Church Army Officers) are handled through a separate Diocesan procedure. These complaints or grievances should be addressed to the Incumbent of the parish.

### 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 be responded to through the Diocesan procedures for handling allegations of abuse.

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, he/she may then invoke this formal procedure.

### Formal procedure for complaints and grievances – stage 1

A complaint should be submitted in writing to a Churchwarden of the parish (who is not him- or herself the subject of the complaint).

A grievance should be submitted in writing to the person to whom the person bringing the grievance is accountable; this will be the direct line manager of a paid employee, or the person responsible for co-ordinating the work of a volunteer. If, however, the person who is accountable is the subject of the grievance, the grievance should be taken to a Churchwarden.

The person bringing the complaint has the opportunity to state his or her case; and to be represented, if they wish, at any meeting by a friend or other supporter.

The Churchwarden (if a complaint) or line manager (if a grievance) will meet with the complainant to listen to and note the facts of the complaint or grievance. He/she will then give to the subject of the complaint or grievance the facts relating to it. The Churchwarden/line manager will then interview the subject of the complaint or grievance, who may also be represented by a friend or other supporter if they wish, to listen to their response to the complaint or grievance brought against them. The Churchwarden/line manager may then interview any other relevant parties.