

# Otter Vale Mission Community

## Complaints policy

The church is a fallible community and its members on occasion behave in ways which are damaging to themselves and others and which undermine the credibility of the Church's witness. This policy helps healing and reconciliation to take place and affirms accountability for our actions. The PCCs of the OVMC recognise that justice involves loving, honouring and respecting others and ensuring that processes and procedures are accessible, consistent, fair and transparent.

### What counts as a complaint?

**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 (whether justified or not). A complaint can be made by someone from within or external to the church community. A formal complaint should only be raised after all other methods of resolution have been exhausted. In other words, raising **a formal complaint should be the last step taken, not the first.**

- Complaints and grievances against clergy are handled through the Clergy Discipline Measure. Complaints or grievances against clergy should be addressed to the Archdeacon or the Area Bishop.
- Complaints and grievances against licensed ministers are handled through the Diocese. These complaints or grievances should be addressed to the Incumbent of the parish.

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.**

### Formal response to complaints

On receiving a complaint it must be received and logged and an acknowledgement sent within 5 working days.

A written record will be made of all the following actions.

- A complaint should be submitted in writing to the Incumbent
- The person bringing the complaint has the opportunity to state his or her case to the Incumbent; and to be represented, if they wish at any meeting, by a friend or other supporter.
- The incumbent will then give to the subject of the complaint the facts relating to it.
- The Incumbent will then interview the subject of the complaint, who may also be represented by a friend or other supporter if they wish, to listen to their response to the complaint brought against them.
- The Incumbent may then interview any other relevant parties. The Incumbent will then draw conclusions and inform the complainant, and the subject of the complaint, of the outcome, ideally within a week of the complaint being made.
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Possible outcomes would be:

- Resolved: agreement has been reached and any follow up actions clearly agreed, including timeframes for the actions and how completion will be communicated to the complainant

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- Partially resolved: Some of the issues have been resolved or some aspects have been agreed but others could not be resolved
- Unresolved: agreement could not be reached

Reviewed: 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023 by the clergy and Churchwardens of the OVMC

### Sample Complaints Form

[church name] Complaint Form

#### Your details

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Phone:**

**Email:**

If anyone else is involved in raising this complaint or are you raising the complaint on behalf of someone else, please give details:

#### About the complaint

**Date(s):**

**Person(s) involved:**

**Complaint about:** (please clearly describe the nature of your complaint)

#### Supporting information:

- *State the matter or name of the person who is the subject of the complaint.*
- *What happened, when and where.*
- *Provide the contact details or statements of any witnesses.*
- *If complaining about a decision, explain what the decision was about, when it was taken, and who made it.*
  - *Explain what impact this decision has had, or you may fear will have, and upon whom.*
- *Provide any additional information that you believe would be helpful.*

#### Q1. Have you tried to resolve this matter informally? YES/NO

*If YES, please move to Q2.*

*If NO, please explain briefly why you decided not to try to resolve the matter informally, then move to Q3.*

#### Q2. If you tried to resolve this matter informally, what happened?

*State who you dealt with, when and where, what information you provided to them, and what you felt was unsatisfactory about the outcome.*

#### Q3. What actions are you wanting the church to take and what outcomes are you seeking?

*Whilst the charity trustees cannot promise to do what you ask, it would be helpful to understand what resolution you are seeking.*

The church will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the church's data protection policy [**insert link to church data protection policy**]. The church cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your complaint confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share your data to review and resolve your complaint.

**Signature of complainant:**

**Date:**

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