

Bury Town Pastors - Complaints Policy

Bury Town Pastors views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at Bury Town Pastors knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Bury Town Pastors.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in Bury Town Pastors.

A complaint can be received in writing, by email or verbally (by phone or in person).

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use Bury Town Pastors Employee Grievance Procedure.

This policy does not cover complaints from volunteers, who should use Bury Town Pastors Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures found in Bury Town Pastors' Personal Development, Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures.

Confidentiality

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

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Trustees of Bury Town Pastors.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on:14th June 2016.....

Last reviewed on:22nd September 2023.....

Complaints Procedure of Bury Town Pastors

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints should be addressed to the Co-ordinator and may be sent to Bury Town Pastors at Sundial House, Bargate Lane, West Row, Bury St Edmunds, IP28 8PS or by email to info@burytownpastors.org.uk

Verbal complaints may be made to the Co-ordinator by phone (07594 334215) or in person to the Co-ordinator or any other Trustee of Bury Town Pastors (phone 07594 334215 to arrange to meet with the Co-ordinator or any other Trustee).

Receiving Complaints

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.

The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the date that the complaint was received
- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address, email address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Bury Town Pastors (for example: person or parent of a person who has been helped by Town Pastors, police officer or doorstaff working alongside Town Pastors)
- Tell the complainant that Bury Town Pastors has a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see **Appendix 1**

Resolving Complaints

Stage One

If the complaint has been made to a Trustee, whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Co-ordinator of Bury Town Pastors as soon as possible and within one week.

On receiving the complaint (from the complainant or from a Trustee), the Co-ordinator should record it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, the Co-ordinator will investigate it and take appropriate action.

If the complaint is related to the Co-ordinator, the complaint will be delegated to one of the Trustees to investigate and to take appropriate action.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person investigating the complaint within one week of the Co-ordinator receiving the complaint. 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.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Ideally the complainant should receive a definitive reply within four weeks of the Co-ordinator receiving the complaint. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply 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 as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. The Board of Trustees will appoint two Trustees to review the complaint. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the two designated Trustees.

The request for Board level 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 two designated Trustees should investigate the facts of the case. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. The complainant may be invited to meet with the two designated Trustees to ensure they fully understand the complaint.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

The two designated Trustees will bring their findings to the Board for consideration.

Ideally the complainant should receive a definitive reply within four weeks of Bury Town Pastors receiving the request for the complaint to be reviewed at Board level. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply 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 as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides 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

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Trustees may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal